

# Old Sleuth Library

**THE DUKE OF NEW YORK.**  
By OLD SLEUTH.

A SERIES OF THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED.

No. 51.

{ SINGLE  
NUMBER. }

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, PUBLISHERS,  
17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST., NEW YORK.

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Vol. III.

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OR,

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### CHAPTER I.

"THERE will be lots of fun in the game to-day."

"Why?"

"The Duke is going to pitch."

In the northern part of Massachusetts is a famous seminary. We will not indicate exactly where, or name the institution, as we are to deal with incidents in our narrative that will be too well remembered by several who figured in the occurrences we shall record.

It was a cold, crisp September morning when two students met, and one of them made the announcement with which we open our story.

"The Duke will pitch, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then it is a cold day for Rolando and his crowd."

"You bet! I tell you there will be fun to-day—heaps of fun, and I will be glad to see the Rolandos beaten, and it will come all the harder on their captain as he hates Tommy Weir and doesn't know that Tommy's a pitcher; but I tell you he can bother the best professional team in the country. He is a wonder, he is; yes, sirree. He is Tommy the phenomenon, when it comes to ball tossing."

About six months previous to the opening of our narrative the stage arrived from the railroad station, about four miles distant from the seat of the academy, bearing a solitary passenger, and this same passenger was a lithe, handsome-faced, blue-eyed lad of sixteen or seventeen.

Several students were standing around when the youth alighted and followed his single trunk into the hotel. This same trunk was a plain and small affair, and was not at all suggestive of an overstocked outfit of clothes or other conveniences.

"I reckon he's a nice sort of fellow," said one of the students, "and he's a handsome chap."

"Milk and water. He's a sawney," said Ralph Rolando.

"He don't look like it; there's resolution gleaming in his eyes."

"Bah! How can you tell? You haven't fairly seen him yet."

"I've seen as much of him as you have, Ralph, and I caught his glance as he shot a freezing look over our crowd."

Ralph Rolando was a Cuban-American. He was the son of a rich merchant—a petted only son, who had been humored until his natural imperiousness of temperament led him to imagine that he was a little king. He had plenty of money, and ever since his first arrival at the school he had set himself up as a leader, and as he had, as has been stated, plenty of money, the position was yielded to him.

Ralph Rolando, unhappily, was not a good-tempered fellow, save when he had his own way in everything. He was what boys call a bulldozer—a jealous fellow, loved only himself, and was capable of hating most bitterly everything and everybody inimical to his own pride and vanity.

The new student remained in his room until the seminary bell for prayers sounded, when he issued forth and reported to the president of the academy.

After prayers an examination followed, and Tommy Weir was assigned to the several classes his proficiency entitled him to enter, and he settled at once right down to the routine of a student.

At the close of the school a young fellow named Perkins—Hiram Perkins—watched our hero as he came forth from the seminary, and advancing toward him, said:

"Welcome to the school, my fellow-student."

"Thank you," said Tommy, as a bright gleam shone in his eye. "You are very kind to come and speak to me."

"Oh, I want you to feel at home. I was a stranger here a year ago, and I think I shall like you."

"Thank you; I hope you will like me. But I am here to study."

"Will you come and take a stroll?"

"Yes, I will be glad to go; I like walking."

The two lads started off together, and Hiram Perkins said:

"You are from New York?"

"Yes; I am the Duke of New York," came the startling answer.

"You are the Duke of New York?" exclaimed Perkins.

"Yes."

"Well, you are a distinguished person. I'm glad I am the first to make your acquaintance."

"Possibly you will not be so glad when I tell you how I came to bear the title."

"Let's hear."

"I'm an orphan."

"Is that so? I'm sorry for you."

"Yes; and I may as well tell you my history. You see, somebody put me in a nursery, as far as I can learn, and afterward I was put in a regular orphan asylum, and when I got older I was adopted by a farmer. He was a good, kind man, but he died when I was about twelve years of age, and as I thought I couldn't find as good a friend in the country I started for New York, and I became a bootblack."

"You were once a bootblack?" exclaimed Perkins, in astonishment.

"Yes. I am bound to tell you the truth. I am not going to travel under false colors."

"But you found your father and mother since?"

"No."

"Then how is it you are able to come here to this expensive school?"

"I'll tell you about that; but may be you do not wish to hear since you know I am only an ex-bootblack?"

"See here, what's your name?"

"Tommy Weir."

"Is that your real name?"

"Yes. It must be, as it was the name written on the card that was pinned to my clothes when I was left at the nursery."

"Excuse me; but you are what they call a foundling?"

"Yes, I suppose I am."

"Well, Tommy Weir, I want to tell you right here, if you are a good, true fellow I'm going to be your friend, I don't care if you are a foundling!"

"Thank you. I guess you will find I am a good fellow; and I am a gentleman, even if I was a bootblack, and I reckon my parents were good people."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I've the natural instincts of a gentleman. I know I have; and I had all these feelings when I was running around for a job to black boots."

"If your parents were good people, why did they desert you?"

"I can't tell, but I've always imagined it was for some good reason."

"Well, Tommy, I'll stick to you."

"Thank you."



"I'm only a farmer's son; and to tell you the truth, some of the students here carry their heads very high—carry them over me—and they won't look at you."  
 "They are welcome to look the other way; I can take care of myself."  
 "But tell me, how came you to be called the Duke of New York?"

## CHAPTER II.

THERE followed a moment's silence as Tommy Weir laughed, and then said:  
 "You will laugh when I tell you how I became the Duke of New York."

"Go ahead. I like to laugh."

"Do you?"

"Yes."

"So do I. You see, as I was only a foundling, when any one asked me who I was I always said for short, 'Oh, I'm the Duke of New York,' and the boys took it up, and from that time I was known as the Duke."

"Do you want me to keep it a secret—all you have told me?"

"No."

"I rather think you had better do so."

"No, no! I'm a queer fellow. I think a great deal, and I've taken a photographic view of the circumstances attending my career. I'm not responsible for the fact that I am an orphan and foundling, and I've made up my mind to start right out and make a corner for myself."

"There's one I know who will never notice you."

"Who is that?"

"His name is Ralph Rolando, the dark-faced fellow who was standing around with us when the stage arrived. He set you down for a greeny."

"Did he?"

"Yes."

"Well, he'd better not run up against me for a greeny."

"Oh, he won't notice you at all; but if he does you had better pay no attention to him."

"Why not?"

"He's the bully of the school."

"He is, eh?"

"Yes; and he is a strong, able-bodied fellow, a good athlete, and awfully domineering and aristocratic. But you will be beneath his notice and attention, so he will not interfere with you."

"He'd better not," said Tommy, in an undertone.

"Halloo! are you a fighter?"

"Well, I reckon I can take care of myself."

"But you can't get away with Ralph. He's too strong, and he knows it. All the students are afraid of him when his temper is up."

"I am not afraid of any one. I attend to my own affairs; but other people had better let me alone, even if they are as big as a house and as strong as Samson."

"I'd advise you to keep out of Rolando's way, all the same."

"I shall not put myself in his way; but he must not interfere with me, that's all."

Tommy Weir took Hiram Perkins further into his confidence; indeed, he did not appear at all desirous of concealing any fact concerning himself.

"If you were a bootblack," said Hiram, "how did you manage to come to school here?"

"I'll tell you about that—it's a very romantic story. You see, I told you how I was adopted by a farmer, and how he died. Well, the day after his funeral I 'skipped.'"

"You skipped?"

"Yes—I ran off without consulting any one. I went to New York and became a little bootblack, and I had knocked about for three years or so, when one day I got a job to black the boots of a queer-looking countryman. I couldn't tell whether he was a clergyman or a school-teacher. He was an odd-looking man, I tell you, but he was as honest as the day is long, and he has a heart in him as big as a bull. I thought he was a 'coon' I could have some fun with, and I commenced to 'rig' him on his little feet, while, in fact, they were trunks, and the mud on them was an inch thick. It took me ten minutes, I should say, to get the mud off before I could begin to blacken up his old clogs, but he was a better man than he looked, and as keen-witted a gentleman as I ever met. I finished his boots, made them shine like a black mirror, and when I got through he asked:

"Well, sonny, how much?"

"Five cents, sir," said I.

"How much for knocking the mud off?"  
 "Nothing, sir. We get it good and bad, and charge only one price."

"What's your name, sonny?" he asked.

"I'm the Duke of New York," I answered.

"Eh," he cried, opening his eyes wide.

"You are the Duke of New York?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bub, what's your real name?"

"Tommy Weir, sir," says I.

"Eh!" he ejaculated again.

"Yes, sir," says I.

"Your name is Tommy Weir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was your father?"

"I never had a father, sir, that I know of."

"Well, who brought you up?"

"I was raised in a foundling home, sir."

"You were?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you go when you got out of the foundling home?"

"I was adopted, sir."

"You were adopted?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who adopted you?"

"A farmer."

"What was his name?"

"Briggs, sir."

"What was his full name?"

"Silas Briggs."

"Where is he now? Why did you leave him?"

"He died, sir."

"He died, eh?"

"Yes."

"What did you do then?"

"I ran away the night after the funeral."

"Why?"

"I wanted to come to New York."

"Why did you want to come to New York?"

"I wanted to work my own way in the world."

"Tommy Weir, I've been looking for you."

"You've been looking for me, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, here I am, sir."

"I'm a lawyer," said he.

"All right, sir, I'm not afraid of you if you are a lawyer."

"You were a little fool to run away."

"I didn't think so, sir."

"You were."

"That's all right."

"If you hadn't run away you would have saved me a great deal of trouble."

"Saved you a great deal of trouble, sir?"

"Yes, and expense."

"I don't see what you're getting at, sir," says I.

"Well, well; there's one thing I've got to tell you, my boy: I'll have to charge you for all my traveling expenses—yes, sir, charge you every penny. But I've traveled as cheaply as I could, and that's very lucky for you."

"I don't understand you, sir," says I.

"Well, I suppose you don't; but it's lucky I've found you, for now I've saved all the expense of advertising."

"I see it all!" cried Hiram, interrupting him.

"What do you see?"

"The farmer left you his fortune."

## CHAPTER III.

AGAIN Tommy Weir laughed, and said:

"You're not quite right; but let me tell you the story."

"Yes, go ahead! I'm deeply interested. I can see it's a weird romance."

"Not very weird, but rather romantic. Yes, and a good thing for me as it turned out. You see, I was all adrift. I did not know what the man meant all the time; but he got down to an explanation after awhile. When he said to me, 'I've saved all the expense of advertising,' I asked:

"What were you going to advertise about, sir?"

"I was going to advertise to find you; yes, and I was going to offer a small reward, and now I've found you I've saved that too."

"Well, here I am, sir, safe and sound," I said.

"Yes; and now tell me what you've been doing."

"I've been blacking boots, sir," I said.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"About fifteen," I answered.

"Well, Tommy," said he, "my name is Briggs. I'm a cousin of the farmer who

adopted you. As I told you, I'm a lawyer, and I'm the executor of my cousin's estate, and when we opened his will we found that he had bequeathed one hundred and twenty-five dollars a year to support you at school until you are twenty-one. He also left the sum of two hundred dollars as an outfit, so you see he did not forget you."

"Wasn't that all very romantic and lucky for you!" cried Perkins.

"You bet it was! for do you know it has been my greatest ambition to secure a good education, and I've been attending night schools in New York, and studying and studying all the time. Yes, and when the good old man told me that I burst right out crying—I could not help it—and he said:

"Come, come, lad! what are you crying about?"

"I told him all—told him how I had studied in night schools, and he said:

"Well, well, I'm delighted! My cousin knew what he was about, after all, and now you are to come with me."

"I will, sir, after a bit."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to toss my box into the river."

"Oh, no, no!"

"I've no more use for it."

"Then sell it."

"Sell it, sir?"

"Yes; some of the boys may want to buy it."

"I thank you, sir," says I; "and now I see how wrong I was. I will not sell it—I'll give it away."

"You'd better sell it."

"No, sir; I'll give it away."

"I started to move away when he called me back and said:

"Hold on, Tommy, there's something in you, and you may be a great man some day."

"I will, sir," I answered, "if I live."

"Keep the box."

"Why?"

"When you are a rich man you can always have it to look at as a reminder of your first beginning and to what heights even a bootblack may attain."

"I'll keep it, sir," I said.

"Well, come along with me."

"Have you got the box, Tommy?"

"Yes; it's in my trunk, and I'm glad I kept it. And to-day I would not take anything for it."

"Bully boy!" cried Hiram. "I admire your pluck; but go on with your story—it beats anything I ever heard."

"Mr. Briggs took me to his hotel—a little place down by Washington Market—and when we reached his room he took out a pencil and paper and figured up. I had been away three years and over, and had not drawn upon the fund, and that amount with interest was to my credit, together with the two hundred that had been bequeathed as an outfitting sum. He figured it all up, charged against it his expenses, credited me with the full interest, and then said:

"Tommy, this sum I will hold to your credit."

"Well, you were a lucky fellow, all things considered."

"Yes, I was a lucky fellow. You see, he took me and bought me some good clothes, and then took me up to his house in the country, and put me into the academy in the adjoining town. I remained there nine months, and then he wrote to the trustees of the institution up here. I am the Duke of New York, the foundling, the ex-bootblack, and as ambitious a lad as ever had a good start in the world on the road to carve out his own fortune."

"I am glad you made a confidant of me, Tommy."

"So am I. Will you like me and associate with me?"

"Yes, I will, and I will be glad to do so. And now I desire to give you some advice."

"Go ahead."

"Do not tell your story to any one else."

"Why not?"

"The boys will conceive a prejudice against you."

"There is something in what you advise."

"I know there is."

"The boys will find out my history some day, however."

"Not necessarily."

"Ah, they will!"



"It's time enough when they do; but I like that title—the Duke of New York."

"It's high enough, I reckon."

"If you've no objection, I will give you that title among the boys without any explanation?"

"All right, just as you please. You seem to be a good, level-headed fellow."

"Well, I've been through the mill. Most of the fellows here are rich men's sons. I am only the son of a farmer, and they look down on me; but if you will let me we'll have some fun. Now I will give it out you are called the Duke of New York, and some day we can make an explanation if we choose."

"That's all right. I am ready to please you, but I tell you it will not be long before the true story will come out."

"Not unless you tell it."

"I will not tell it; but you say the boys look down on you?"

"Yes; all on account of that fellow Ralph Rolando."

"He don't like you, eh?"

"No; he is an aristocratic fellow, and he will put on airs to you."

"Airs don't hurt."

"He may try to impose upon you and insult you."

"He had better not try," came the answer, in a meaning tone.

#### CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE the two new friends separated Hiram Perkins secured a promise from Tom Weir that he would not, under any circumstances, reveal his true history until such time as he had been consulted about the matter.

"I am sorry to be put under a promise," he said.

"I want you to promise on my account."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you: this fellow Ralph Rolando has insulted me several times, and I wish to get square with him."

"How can you get square with him on my promise?"

"I can; and you must promise me faithfully."

"I like to be obliging."

"You will oblige me very much."

"Very well; I will promise."

"Now, remember, no matter what you hear or what attentions you receive, you are not to reveal anything or deny anything; you are merely to say it's nobody's business about your affairs."

"You're up to some game, Hiram."

"Yes, I am; and we'll have lots of fun, may be, unless Ralph should set to do you harm."

"Are you afraid he may do me harm?"

"He may."

"What can he do?"

"He may provoke you to a quarrel and then give you a trouncing. It's his game; he's an awful mean fellow."

"He may provoke me to a quarrel?"

"Yes."

"And then give me a trouncing. Is that his way?"

"Yes, he is really such a sneak. He will not come right out and whale a fellow, but he worries him into an assault and then gives it to him."

"That's his way, eh?"

"Yes."

"Hiram, let me tell you something: if this fellow, Ralph Rolando as you call him, comes any of his gum games over me he will get the worst of it."

"Will you down him with a stone?"

"Down him with a stone? No; but he'll think he was hit by a stone if he ever molests me."

"Oh, you can't stand up against him!"

"I can't, eh?"

"No."

"What makes you think so?"

"He is as strong as a mule, and you are only a slight-built lad—rather delicate, I should say."

"That's your idea, eh?"

"One can see you are not strong."

"I don't look strong?"

"No."

There came a peculiar look to Tommy's face as he held out his arm, and laying his hand on his muscle, said:

"Feel there."

Hiram placed his hand as directed, and as he felt a great heap of muscle, exclaimed:

"My goodness!"

"How is that?" demanded Tom.

"My goodness gracious!" again ejaculated Hiram.

Tom held back his leg and said, as he clapped his hand on the calf:

"Feel there."

Hiram did feel, and again he uttered a cry of amazement.

"Do you think I am a delicate little fellow now?"

"I never saw anything like it. You are a little giant."

"I am giant enough for any fellow in this academy who tries to impose upon me, that's all."

"Can you spar?"

"Can I?"

"Yes, can you?"

"Well, it's just a natural accomplishment of mine; and now, see here, Hiram, you needn't fear any fellow around here will impose upon you or myself. We'll just take care of them."

"How did you raise such a muscle—you look so slender?"

"It came by nature, I reckon, and a little practice helped along; but it takes a good fellow to impose upon me. I am not quarrelsome, but you see I've had to take care of myself for three years, and there are a pretty rough set of lads around New York, and then I've rowed and played foot-ball and base-ball and everything else. I've wrestled and sparred and been knocked around in all kinds of shapes, so I reckon I'm all right."

"Can you row well?"

"I can."

"And play ball?"

"You bet!"

"What position do you play?"

"I'm a pitcher."

"Is that so?"

"You bet!"

"Well, this is just jolly. I can see there will be trouble between you and Rolando."

"There will be, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He is the best rower in the academy; he is captain and pitcher of the academy ball nine; in fact, he is way ahead of all the other boys in everything, and it's funny too."

"What is funny?"

"He seemed to discern something from real instinct."

"What do you mean?"

"He took a prejudice against you at first sight."

"He did, eh?"

"Yes; when you first arrived this morning I could see he had conceived a dislike for you. He may have felt it in his bones, or may be he got down on you because you're so good-looking."

"Good-looking?"

"Yes. There's one thing certain: you will take with the girls, and that will make Rolando mad. He is a great girls' fellow, he is, and you being handsomer than he will make him down on you."

"I don't care much for girls, so he will be all right there."

"But you haven't seen her yet."

"Who?"

"Myra Hubbard, the belle of the village, and the handsomest and smartest girl in the world."

"She won't notice a bootblack."

"But no one will know you were a bootblack."

"They will find it out some day."

"Not if you follow my advice. It's nobody's business what you were, and you are a young gentleman now."

"Ralph can have Miss Hubbard. All I want is a chance to study and get ahead in the school. I hope to go to college if the money holds out, and then I will be ready to start out in life."

The two lads were walking along and were met by two girls, and one of the girls, who had a veil over her face, stared at the new student as she passed him, and the next moment Hiram exclaimed:

"There! I thought so. There'll be fun, you bet, and won't it be jolly to see that fellow Rolando laid out!"

"What do you mean, Hiram?"

"That was Myra Hubbard who just passed."

"Which one?"

"The girl behind the veil."

"Well?"

"She looked right at you; yes, she's struck. I knew she would be, and she is the loveliest girl in America. Wait until you see her face."

Our hero did feel a thrill as he listened to Hiram's words.

#### CHAPTER V.

HIRAM chanced to look around, and he exclaimed:

"Well, well! who would have thought of it?"

"Well, what do you mean now?"

"Myra is going to have a second look at you. See, the girls have crossed the road and are hurrying down on the other side. Let us walk slow, and they will cross and meet us again. She's gone on you at first sight, by jiminy! But won't Ralph Rolando be wild! He'll find it out. She will show her liking, and he'll go for you."

"I wish she would let me see her face. I don't care a cent for this fellow Rolando!"

The lads walked slowly and the girls recrossed, and a second time passed over two friends. Myra raised her veil, and Tom caught a passing glimpse of her face, and he was really charmed. It was indeed a beautiful face—one of the sweetest he had ever seen—and she appeared to be as merry and blithesome as a bird.

"She's gone!" said Hiram.

"She's a pretty girl," remarked Tom; and he added: "But I don't care; she will not care for me when she finds out I am only an ex-bootblack."

"She need not find it out."

"I wouldn't let her be deceived for the world!"

"Halloo!" cried Hiram, in a significant tone.

"What now?"

"I see—"

"What?"

"You're gone also; it's love at first sight!"

"Nonsense; you're way off!"

"We shall see."

That same afternoon Hiram met Ralph Rolando, and the latter, hailing him, said:

"I see you've got acquainted with the new student."

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"He is the Duke of New York."

"The Duke of New York?"

"Yes."

"Why do you call him the Duke of New York? There are no dukes in this country."

"That's what they call him—so I've been told."

"He told you himself, I suppose?"

"I guess not."

"Who did tell you?"

"Well, I met a man who knows him. When I asked him if he was the Duke, he wanted to deny it."

"Why do they call him the Duke?"

"Because he is so handsome, so rich, and so smart. He met Myra Hubbard while I was with him, and she is dead gone on him at first sight."

"Bah! you are gone, Hiram Perkins. You always were a fool!"

"You may call me a fool, but you had better not call the Duke a fool."

"If he gets in my way I'll call him a fool quick enough."

"Take my advice, and don't do it, that's all."

"What do I care for a milk-and-water sawney like him?"

"You may find out he is not a sawney; and I tell you, take my advice and don't go fooling around him, that's all."

"I've a mind to give you a cuff!"

"What for?"

"Your impudence."

"You won't do much cuffing around here, I reckon, if the Duke once gets at you."

Hiram moved away after his words of warning, and the Cuban marched off in quite a sulking mood. The truth is he had recognized that our hero was a singularly handsome youth, and he had conceived a great dislike for him from the first moment he beheld him.

Hiram was perfectly correct in his suspicions, and Rolando was particularly worked up by the words, "Myra Hubbard is clean gone on him already."

"I'll drive that fellow away from here mighty quick," was Ralph's muttered exclamation, as he walked away.

That evening there was to be a country dance at the tavern, and quite a number of the students were on hand to see the fun. They were not permitted to take part in the dance, but they were on-lookers, and among those taking a



peep were Ralph Rolando, Hiram Perkins, and our hero, Tom Weir.

The boys were crowding around the door. Rolando came in rather late, and he commenced to elbow his way through the group, and finally he came to where our hero was standing, and he shoved the latter aside in a rough manner and without any ceremony.

Tom's blood was up in a moment, and he pushed the Cuban back, and angrily demanded:

"Who are you pushing?"

"I'm pushing you."

"Well, don't do it again."

"Who are you, any way?" came the demand.

"It don't matter who I am. One thing is certain: I don't mean to be knocked around by you."

The boys spoke in a loud tone, and the keeper of the tavern, overhearing loud talking, appeared on the scene, and commanded silence.

The lads obeyed, as they feared being ordered out, but Tom and Ralph eyed each other after the manner of angry boys who have had a disagreement.

After watching the dance awhile, Tom and Hiram walked away, and a few moments later were followed by Ralph and a friend. Ralph, when once outside, came toward Tom, and said:

"Now we are outside, what have you got to say?"

"I've got as much to say as you have!" came the answer.

"You daren't come down to the barn!"

"I dare go anywhere I choose!" retorted Tom.

The barn was a building where the lads had fitted up a gymnasium, and where they had sparring and wrestling bouts and the like.

"Well, come along," said Ralph, and he walked away.

Hiram caught Tom by the arm, and said:

"Don't go."

"Why not?"

"He wants to fight you."

"Good enough! I'll give him all the fight he wants. Let's go to the barn."

"Can you beat him?"

"Can't tell until I try. I'll try, though! Come, let's go to the barn."

#### CHAPTER VI.

HIRAM PERKINS felt a little shaky. He knew that Ralph was a much larger and stouter lad than Tom, and he feared the result.

"Don't go, Tom," he said, catching hold of him.

"Why not?"

"He wants to fight."

"All right; he can have all the fight he wants."

"But don't go to-night."

"Why not to-night?"

"We ain't sure, you know."

"Sure of what?"

"He may brain you. We had better make sure."

"Oh, nonsense! You need not fear for me; I can take care of him."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, I don't know about it."

"I do, though. That fellow came right there to insult me, and he followed me out, and now he's invited me to come to the barn. I guess I'll go, and won't back out, even though I were sure he would knock me all to pieces. No, sir, I am with him for one 'run in,' anyhow."

The two lads started for the barn, and as they walked along they saw Ralph and his friend just entering the building ahead of them.

"I didn't think it would come so soon," said Hiram.

"As good now as any other time," remarked Tom, and he straightened up and braced himself for a lively tussle.

"By George!" said Hiram, "I do hope you will get the better of him and serve him out well if it comes to a tussle. If he downs you it will be bad."

"Why?"

"He will make it uncomfortable for you during your whole stay at the school, and for me also, I reckon."

"How can he do that?"

"You have not had any experience at an academy yet."

"Oh, yes; I had a little up in the country."

"Then you should know how it is."

"Well, yes; but the boot was on the other leg there."

"How so?"

"I was the champion, and I will be here. I am sorry there is such a fellow as this Ralph Rolando around. It makes it unpleasant, but a fellow like him must not be permitted to impose upon others."

"He does all the time."

"All right. He may learn something new to-night."

As Tom spoke the last words he and his friend reached the barn. They entered, and found Ralph and his friend waiting. The latter had lighted the lamps, and there was a leer on his face as he scanned our hero over and over.

Ralph walked up to Tom and said:

"You got mad to-night."

"Did I?"

"Yes, you did."

"You're mistaken. A fellow like you couldn't make me mad."

"Oh! you're high-toned, eh?"

"Well, I'm too high-toned to be knocked around by a fellow like you."

"You're sassy for a new-comer."

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are."

"Well?"

"I don't want to hurt you, but I'm going to teach you a lesson."

"I came here to learn."

"Did you?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'll get some knowledge you didn't bargain for. I take it, you want to fight me."

"Do you take it that way?"

"Yes, I do."

"I guess you are giving me credit for your own feelings; but I don't care."

"I've a good mind to give you a sound trouncing—you deserve it."

"Do I?"

"Yes; for a fresh student you have started in to put on airs, but I'll take the airs all out of you. You are such a pretty boy I'll only drub you."

"Thank you for your kindness and consideration."

"You talk rather boldly."

"Do I?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Do you want to put on the gloves with me?"

"I don't mind."

Seeing the barn lighted up, a number of students strolled down to learn what was going on, and there was quite an assemblage of lads present when Ralph extended his invitation.

Ralph's friend, with a sardonic leer upon his face, got down the sparring gloves, and as he handed them to the Cuban, the latter spoke again, addressing our hero:

"I suppose you know our rules?"

"No; I am a new arrival, as you know."

"A fellow who gets trounced and enters a complaint or squeals will be ignored by every lad in the school."

"That's all right."

"You're not a tell-tale?"

"No."

"You will take what you get and be silent?"

"I will, certainly."

"Now, see here, if you will ask my pardon I will let you off."

"You are very kind!"

"Will you beg my pardon?"

"Why should I?"

"To save yourself a good drubbing."

"I'd rather take the drubbing."

"You will have to apologize in the end."

"Will I?"

"Yes, or take the greatest whaling you ever suffered in your life."

"I'll take the whaling."

"Just as you please. I've given you a chance."

The other boys stood around with wonder depicted upon their faces.

Ralph was known to be such an expert, so strong and agile, and so much larger than Tom that one of the lads stepped up to our hero and said:

"You had better apologize."

"Why?"

"He will pound you unmercifully."

"Will he?"

"Yes; he is the best fighter and the strongest boy in the school. You can be no match for him."

"I can stand a drubbing."

"I fear you can not stand the knocking he will give you. Take my advice: apologize, and let it all end in good part."

"It will end all right," said Tom.

It was evident that Ralph was getting a little uneasy. He did not like the coolness and indifference of the new-comer, and he had much at stake—more than Tom. He had his supremacy to maintain, and a downing would be bad. He did not exactly fear getting worsted, but he did feel a little uneasy. There is something very depressing in standing before a person of nerve and coolness under the circumstances that had led the two youths to confront each other.

"See here," said Ralph, "I will not exact a regular apology. If you will say you are sorry I will let you off."

"Will you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am not sorry. You deliberately set to annoy me; you renewed the annoyance after we had come out on the road; you invited me down here, and I am on deck. I never apologize unless I am in the wrong; I never say I am sorry unless I am sorry—and I've done nothing to be sorry for. I came here a stranger; I had done nothing to annoy you; but, for some reason, you set upon me from the start. You invited me to spar with you; I accepted your invitation. This quarrel is not of my seeking, but yours. I will not apologize, and you can save time. I am ready."

#### CHAPTER VII.

Tom had won the good will of many of the boys by his show of good sense and courage. One thing was certain: he may have been a little undersized, but he was game, and evidently not afraid of his larger antagonist.

Ralph, meantime, had become more and more uncomfortable. The eye is a powerful factor, an immense weapon in certain circumstances, and there was what the lads call "blood" in Tom Weir's eyes. He had a gleam in them that was wicked in a non-malignant sense, a sort of playful viciousness that was very unnerving to the other party.

"So you're bound to take the drubbing?" said Ralph.

"I am if you can give it to me."

"Do you think you can best me?"

"We can tell better when we get through. Let him boast himself that taketh off his armor."

"Halloo! you're a Sunday-school boy, eh?"

"We'll see. I may go over Sunday, and knock you into the middle of next week."

The boys all laughed, and the laugh proved that Ralph was not really liked, and that the majority of the boys would gladly see him worsted.

The laugh riled Ralph, and he said:

"All right. I'll give you every chance."

"Thank you," came the answer.

"Get yourself ready," said Ralph.

"I am ready."

Ralph took off his coat, but Tom did not, and one of the boys advised him to strip.

"I'm all right," answered Tom.

"You don't mean to box me, after all," said Ralph.

"I guess I'll give you a good 'mill.'"

The two boys had put on the gloves, two other lads were selected as seconds, a third one was deputed to act as referee, and then the two antagonists faced each other, and it was wonderful how suddenly the delicate-looking Tom swelled to larger proportions the moment he put up his hands; and Ralph discovered also how he had grown. There was no awkwardness in his posture or movements, and a chill went through Ralph as he suddenly realized that he was to face a good match. The two lads sparred and feinted a half minute, and then Ralph suddenly hit out with his right, when, without any seeming effort, Tom sent forth his left hand and Master Ralph keeled over and went to the floor as easily as though he had slipped upon a piece of orange peel.

There was blood in his eye as he rose and made a rush at Tom; but he received some short-arm punching that staggered and blinded him, and he would have got another sockdologer in all probability if at that inopportune moment the barn door had not opened and one of the preceptors appeared.

"Here, here! What's going on?"

Ralph at once removed his gloves. He for one was glad of the interruption; but he said:



"We are only exercising in fun."  
 "But are you young gentlemen aware it is after hours?"  
 The boys all protested that they had not heard the bell.  
 "Get away to your rooms as quickly as you can, and I will say nothing about it," kindly hinted the preceptor.  
 The latter was the most popular teacher in the school, and the boys scattered and started off to their rooms, excitedly discussing the interrupted "mill."  
 Ralph and his friend were the last to get out of the barn, and as they wandered forth Nelson Ward, his comrade, said:  
 "By ginger, Ralph! it was lucky."  
 "What was lucky?"  
 "The appearance of the teacher."  
 "Why?"  
 "He would have knocked you out. He's a wonder!"  
 "Is he?"  
 "Yes, he is."  
 "You're a fool! Don't you know I was only playing a waiting game—finding him out? I was just ready to go in and floor him when the preceptor came in."  
 "Were you really going to lay him out?"  
 "You bet I was going to lay him out. I was only fooling with him."  
 Nelson Ward did not dissent from his friend's declaration but in his own mind he thought much. Ward was an impecunious fellow who lived off Ralph and toadied to him for favors. He was a sort of Uriah Heep, but no fool.  
 "He's a good one," said Ward.  
 "No; he doesn't amount to anything."  
 "What made you let him down you?"  
 "That was an accident. You see, I did not expect there was anything in him, and he caught me napping; but what a whaling I would have given him!"  
 "You won't get mad, Ralph?"  
 "Go ahead!"  
 "Take my advice."  
 "Well?"  
 "He's a low fellow."  
 "Yes."  
 "Don't notice him in future; don't favor him even by knocking him out. He will consider that an honor."  
 "I've been thinking of that; but, hang it! I'd rather have had about two minutes more with him."  
 "I know that. I could see you were going for him—there was mischief in your eye; but that fellow is beneath you. I wouldn't notice him."  
 "I must give him one good drubbing."  
 "I wouldn't if I were you."  
 "He'll crow over me if I don't warm him."  
 "That won't hurt you half as much as to honor him with a second meeting."  
 Nelson Ward was a cunning fellow, as we have said. He was no fool. He did not dare tell Ralph that Tom would have pulverized him in about three minutes; but he did wish to reconcile his comrade to the event and soothe him into safety, for Ward knew that the reign of Ralph as a leader was over the moment he was downed.  
 "What will the boys say if I don't meet him again?" said Ralph.  
 "Oh, I can fix that all right!"  
 "But they saw him knock me down."  
 "I can explain all that."  
 "You can?"  
 "Yes."  
 "So they will see how it happened?"  
 "Yes."  
 "But I'd like to meet him again, and, hang it! I will."  
 "No, no; you must not!"  
 "I'll think it over."  
 "And you will take my advice, I know," said Ward.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MEANTIME our hero and Hiram walked away together, and the latter remarked:  
 "Tom, you are a remarkable fellow. Oh, ginger! how big you did grow when you stood up to knock him out!"  
 "Bah! it is no trouble to knock him out."  
 "I'm rather sorry this has occurred so soon."  
 "Why?"  
 "You have made an enemy. That fellow will be against you, and he will make up in the strength and vigor of his tongue what he lacks in the muscles on his arm. On no account must you make a confidant of any other stu-

dent—you must not tell them the part of your history that you told me."

"I am not ashamed of my history. I was never a thief, and I am not responsible for the fact that I was a foundling, as they call it."

"But you must keep your secret."

"May be I will."

"You must promise me."

"I will say nothing about it for the present—I will promise you that."

On the day following the incidents we have recorded, after the school sessions, the students were out in the campus scattered in groups, and the subject of discussion on every side was the mill that had taken place down in the barn. There was a natural prejudice against the new student, and a large majority of the boys sided with Ralph Rolando and believed the statements that Nelson Ward made—that Rolando was not well, and that he had slipped down when he appeared to be knocked over.

That same evening Ralph gave a little entertainment at his rooms in the tavern. He did not lodge at the school, as did a majority of the students, but had a suite of rooms at the little hotel, while Tom had been compelled to take lodgings in the building and get his meals outside at a boarding-house.

Neither Tom nor Hiram was invited to the entertainment, and Ralph, who had plenty of money, gave a goodly number of the lads a good treat, and during the evening no allusion was made to our hero or the little bout that had occurred.

After the entertainment Nelson Ward remained with his friends, and Rolando asked:

"What do the boys say?"

"Oh, I have fixed that all right; but there is one fellow who is doing a good deal of loud talking."

"Who is that?"

"Hiram Perkins. He says his friend, the Duke of New York, as he calls him, would have knocked you into flinters if it had not been for the appearance of Hamilton, the tutor."

"That fellow has a good deal to say, anyhow."

"Yes, he has."

"I'll give him a drubbing some day."

"It would be a good thing."

"And I'll drub the Duke also some day."

"You had better not tackle him."

"Oh, I know all about him. He is a good opener, but when it comes to a rough-and-tumble I'll fix him."

"Don't seek any trouble with him."

"Why?"

"He is a dangerous fellow—you can see that. We will get him out of the school—get him sent away."

"How can we do that?"

"He is a pretender."

"He is?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He has come here pretending to be very rich, but I don't believe his folks have got a cent."

"What makes you think so?"

"Look at his clothes; they are of the cheapest sort. A fellow who has plenty of money would dress better than he does."

"That's so, and we will get him away from here; but I'll give him a good drubbing first. It won't do to let the boys think he can get away with me."

"They don't think so. I've taken care of that, and as long as you keep out of his way it will be all right."

"I'll fix that Hiram, though!"

"You must be careful about that. But I do wish he could be made to keep his mouth shut."

"He'll keep it shut."

On the day following came a half holiday, and the boys were to play a match game of ball.

The academy students had a team, and Ralph Rolando was its captain, and there was a team coming from a neighboring town in response to a challenge.

Half the village and about all the students turned out to see the match, and among the spectators was our hero and his new friend, Hiram Perkins.

The game commenced, and it was a well-played game of ball. The academy boys were victors, and to Ralph Rolando was due the full credit of the victory. Up to the last half of the ninth inning the game was a tie, and Ralph was the last man at the bat. Two were out, and all depended upon him. He faced a good

ball, caught it on the end of his bat, and sent the ball flying over the outfielders' heads, and, amid a tempest of applause, made a clean home run, and won the game.

Tom felt that Ralph had done well, and he shouted and applauded loudly with the others. He was an ardent lover of the game, a good player, and generous in his instincts, and was prepared to give full credit where it was due. The visiting team was quite a crack nine. They were older and larger men, as a rule, than the students, and they felt very sore over their defeat. One of their number was a very violent fellow—a chap who had no control over himself—and he bitterly felt the defeat, as he had made some bets with outsiders, and he was very wroth at his losing his money as well as the credit of victory. He had looked upon the game as a soft thing, and after the crowd had gone away he waited to meet Ralph, and began asserting that the decisions had been unfair. Ralph protested, and, in his enthusiasm, Tom Weir stepped forward and took part in the controversy. Our hero claimed that the decisions had been fair and just, and that the visiting nine had been squarely beaten on their merits.

The fellow turned on Tom, and demanded:

"What have you got to say about it, you white-faced dude?"

"I've got as much to say about it as any one, and I say the academy nine beat you fair and square, and they can do it again."

"What do you know about the game?"

"Enough to know that you're no good," came the answer.

Tom was a little riled at the fellow's insulting manner, especially as his remarks were made in the presence of all the students, who were gathered around. There was blood in the eye of the other fellow when Tom spoke out as he did.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE captain of the visiting nine lost his temper entirely, and, advancing to Tom, said, as he shook his fist in the latter's face:

"You're too fresh; no one asked your opinion."

"I've as good a right to express my opinion as any one else; it was an open game."

"Well, you shut up!"

"No, I won't shut up."

"You won't?"

"No."

"I'll make you."

"No, you won't."

The ball player lost his temper absolutely, and with an oath he made a vicious pass at Tom, and the next moment he went rolling in the grass, knocked over by as pretty a blow as ever downed a bully.

At once there was a rush. The friends of the ball player ran to his assistance, and all hands set to terminate the fight, and Hiram Perkins sought to draw Tom away, but Tom would not move. He asserted:

"The fellow attempted to strike me. I only expressed my opinion."

The ball men knew that their companion was in the wrong, and dragged him away, and the truth is the fellow was but a bully after all, and although he struggled and made a great pretense of returning and renewing the contest, he submitted just sufficiently to be led off.

That evening Ward and his friend Rolando were together, and Ward said:

"By George! it's just as I told you. That fellow is a terror! Did you see how easily he downed that fellow to-day?"

"Yes; but if the other fellow had come at him again he would have hurt him."

"I must give him the credit of saying I don't believe it. Hang it! he is bound to become the hero of the school. The boys are beginning to say he's a dandy, you see. He's such a handsome fellow, and don't look like a smasher, but he seems to have the pluck of the devil. Why, it looked as though the other fellow would annihilate him. He don't appear to fear anything."

"I wish he had never come here."

"So do I, because some of the fellows are really beginning to like him, and the girls are all talking about him. I heard Myra Hubbard say, 'Isn't he handsome and brave!'"

"Did she say that?"

"Yes."

"He ain't handsome; he's too pale."

"Well, yes; but he's got such handsome eyes, the girls are sure to like him. He's just the sort of fellow they admire, and if he proves



himself a hero, they'll go wild over him; and that fellow Perkins is talking him up all the time."

"I'll warn that fellow Perkins!"

"It won't do."

"What won't do?"

"You must not harm Perkins."

"Why not?"

"If you do Tom Weir will take it up for him."

"Let him."

"That won't do; but we can manage it."

"Manage what?"

"Manage Perkins."

"How?"

"Get him away from this fellow."

"How can we do it?"

"I'll tell you; Perkins is jealous; you have not noticed him."

"I hate him."

"That's all right; but you must pretend to like him, and we'll get him away from Weir, and get him with us, and I think he knows all about this Duke of New York, and can tell us something we'd like to know. I can manage it."

"How?"

"Leave it to me."

"What will you do?"

"If you consent, I'll invite him down here to-morrow, and we'll flatter him, and get everything out of him."

"All right; you manage it."

"I will."

On the following day Nelson Ward did make up to Hiram Perkins, and said:

"Say, Hiram, you're a good ball player."

"How do you know I am?"

"Ralph saw you tossing with the boys the other day."

"Did he?"

"Yes; and he wants to have a talk with you. He thinks of putting you on the nine to cover left field."

Hiram Perkins was really flattered. He was a good ball player, and the left field was his position, and he had often wished to play on the nine. He knew he could do better than the young fellow who was playing the position.

"Will you come down and see Ralph?"

"Does he want to see me?"

"Yes; he asked me to invite you down to his rooms to-night."

"May be I'll come."

"You must come, for we have the return match next Wednesday afternoon, and Ralph wants to hold the lead for the academy."

"I'll come down, because I want the academy boys to win."

Hiram walked on in a thoughtful mood. He was a little perplexed; he did not understand it at all. As has been stated, he had long desired to be upon the nine, and there were other boys in the academy who would have considered it a high honor. Hiram, however, was a pretty smart fellow, and as he thought the matter over, he muttered:

"There's something in this. Ralph don't like me. He hates me; I know it; and he'd almost rather lose the game than let me get any credit."

Hiram continued to think the matter over, and the more he thought the greater the light that was let in upon his mind, and at length he muttered:

"I see; it is a flank movement. They want to get me away from Tom Weir. All right. I'll go down there to Ralph's room, but he won't get me away from my friend Tom—you can bet they won't. No, no; Tom is true blue!"

Later on Hiram went to Tom's room, and said:

"Well, the queerest thing has happened."

"What is that?"

"Rolando has sent for me."

"Sent for you?"

"Yes."

"What does he want?"

"He wants to put me on the nine."

"Can you play?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on; it's an honor. I wish I was on the nine myself."

That night Hiram did go down to Rolando's room, and the cat was let out of the bag.

## CHAPTER X.

To Hiram Perkins's surprise Rolando was very cordial and pleasant, and expressed great

hopes of putting Hiram on the nine, and the boys fell into a talk on base-ball in general. Then Ralph cruelly produced a treacherous wine which he called a harmless syrup, and he persuaded Hiram to drink.

Hiram Perkins had never tasted liquor in his life. The wine was thick and sweet, and did taste like a harmless syrup, but in reality it was a most powerful liquor, and its insidious fumes soon ascended to Hiram's head. He became boastful and talkative, as oftentimes will those more experienced in the use of liquors.

There came a glitter into Ralph Rolando's eyes. He knew how powerful was the drug, and Nelson Ward also smiled in a malignant manner, as he appreciated how readily poor Hiram had fallen into the trap. The latter tasted several times of the fatal drug. It was sweet to the taste, and soon all his good sense vanished. He became more and more talkative, and Rolando said:

"I like you, Perkins—I always did like you; but somehow you have always kept aloof from me."

"Do you really like me?"

"Yes, I do."

"I thought you hated me."

"What made you think so?"

"I thought you showed it in your eye."

"Ah! how sadly mistaken you were. Here's my hand, old fellow. You and I must be good friends, and we will have the best ball nine in America."

"Of course we will."

"We may be bringing in your new friend."

"My new friend?"

"Yes."

"Which friend?"

"The Duke of New York, as they call him."

"Oh, he is a splendid fellow, he is! I'm sorry you two had trouble; but it can be made all straight."

"Why do they call him the Duke?"

"Don't you know?"

"There are several stories going around."

"I know all about him."

The liquor had complete possession of the wits of the poor fellow Perkins. Had he been himself, he would have been as true as steel, but his wits were out. He was under the dominion of liquor, and for the time being he was a chattering idiot.

"You know all about him?"

"Yes."

"Well, tell us why they call him the Duke."

"I will not."

"You won't tell?"

"Certainly not. It's a secret."

"That's all right."

"He told everything to me."

"He seems a nice fellow."

"He is a splendid fellow, although he was a bootblack once."

"A what?" ejaculated both Ralph and Nelson.

"A bootblack."

"Do you mean to tell us he was once a bootblack?"

"Yes; but you must not tell. I just let you know it in confidence, you know."

Nelson Ward and Ralph Rolando exchanged glances.

"Tell us all about it," said Ward.

Hiram Perkins got mixed. He told a connected story, but did not confine himself to the real facts. He said that Tom Weir had really been a bootblack, but he had been found by a relative of his adopted father, and it came out that he was heir to a big fortune.

The first part of the statement was true, as our readers know; the latter part was an unintentional exaggeration.

When the two schemers had pumped Hiram dry their manner changed, and Rolando said:

"I am sorry you told us what you did."

"Why?"

"We can't have him in the nine, and I'm very much obliged to you for coming down to see me, and now you must go."

Poor Perkins! He was really intoxicated and noisy, and Nelson Ward feared exposure, and said he would accompany him to his room.

Our hero had secured a room next to the one occupied by Hiram, and he was waiting for his friend when he heard a noise in the hall. He looked out and saw Ward sustaining Perkins as he helped him along to his room.

"Here, take care of your friend," said Ward, addressing Tom Weir.

"Where has he been?" asked Tom, who recognized at a glance the real condition of affairs.

"I don't know where he has been," said Nelson Ward. "I found him walking around and I thought I would bring him to his room."

"I've been down to Ralph Rolando's," cried Hiram, "and he's put me on the nine, and he is going to put you there soon."

"He has not been near Rolando's rooms to-night," said Ward. "Now, take care of him."

Ward let go his hold upon Hiram, and was going away, when Tom said:

"Hold on, don't go."

"I must hurry to my room."

"You must come into Hiram's room."

"I must?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? Do you know who you are talking to, you bootblack?"

Tom's eyes flashed as he advanced toward Ward. The latter would have retreated, but our hero had caught him by the arm.

"I want you to come into Hiram's room."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I'll tell you when you get there."

"I won't go."

"It will be better for you if you come."

"I won't."

"You won't?"

"No."

"Take care. I warn you."

"You warn me?"

"Yes."

"How dare you warn me?"

"You will find out if you don't come, and it will be better for your friend Rolando."

"I won't go; I must hasten to my own room."

"You shall go!"

"I shall?"

"Yes."

"Who'll make me go?"

"I will."

"How dare you?"

"See here, you brought Hiram here in this condition. Come into his room, and nothing shall be said about it; go away and I will report the whole matter."

"What do I care what you report?"

"You will care."

"I will?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I know who gave Hiram the liquor."

## CHAPTER XI.

NELSON WARD looked confused for a moment. The giving of liquor by one student to another was a very serious offense, and the taking of liquor also, and the chances favored immediate expulsion in the latter case, and certain expulsion in the former; and the circumstances under which the liquor had been administered to Perkins were very aggravating. When Hiram came to his senses, if exposure followed, he would tell the whole story, and not only would Ralph Rolando be involved, but Ward also; and as Ward thought the matter over quickly he realized the actual situation.

He and Ralph had not calculated the chances when they plied Hiram with the treacherous wine; but when Tom Weir said, in his singularly significant manner, "I know who gave Hiram the liquor," the aspect changed immediately, and he, as stated, was suddenly confronted with the possible consequences. But after a moment's thought he determined to play off from the start, and he said:

"I suppose you know Hiram was down to Rolando's room?"

"Yes, I know it."

"Well, what of it?"

"You know as well as I do."

"But do you know he came there in this condition?"

"He did, eh?"

"Yes; and we kept him down there awhile and tried to sober him up, and then I brought him over to his room, and this is the thanks I get for it."

"It is unfair if what you say is true, and you had better come into Hiram's room and we will talk the matter over."

Nelson Ward entered Perkins's room, assured that he had struck the right defense, and assumed a swagger as he did so; but the moment he was in the room and the door was closed he got a shot that staggered him, as Tom Weir said:



"Nelson Ward, this is a piece of mean and dirty business."

"I'd like to know what you mean."

"I mean just what I say: this is a piece of mean, dirty business, and if I did the right thing I'd report you and the other mean fellow who has put up the trick."

"Put up the trick?"

"Yes."

"What trick?"

"The mean trick of getting Hiram to take liquor."

"I think you do not know what you are talking about."

"Yes, I do."

"And dare you declare that we got Hiram into this condition?"

"That is just what I do affirm."

"It's false!"

"I know better."

"I tell you Hiram came down to Rolando's rooms as you see him, only a great deal worse."

"It is not true. Hiram does not drink. He must have been tricked or he would never have tasted a drop."

"Oh! this is what you suspect."

"It is what I know to be true, and when Hiram comes around all right he will remember enough of the little game to confirm my statements."

"Then you will both assert what is false."

"I've something to tell you: I knew Perkins was going down to your friend's room; I knew you had invited him."

"Suppose you did?"

"When he started to go down to Rolando's room he left my company."

"Suppose he did?"

"I followed him down there."

"You're a sneak."

"Be careful what you say. The real sneaks are the two fellows who gave him liquor in order to get him to talk so that you could pump him. You succeeded, and now you wish to lie out of it, but you can not. I suspected your game, and I've all the evidence against you, and I can prove by others what you two mean fellows have done."

"You report this matter and Hiram will be expelled."

"He will not be expelled, but you and Ralph Rolando will be, as your trick was a preconcerted game. Now, there's one thing I want to tell you—go back and tell your friend that if one word is revealed about me I will expose your whole game."

"What do we care about you?"

"You will care something about me before you get through. You addressed me as a bootblack. I see you desire to start a slander concerning me. Look out what you say, that's all! My advice to you both is to keep your mouths shut. Now you can go, as I have let you understand the situation, and you will hear from me again."

Nelson Ward sneaked out of the room, and Tom Weir prepared to put Hiram into his cot. The lad was already in a maudlin slumber, and Tom determined to remain with him overnight.

Meantime, Nelson Ward retired to Ralph Rolando's rooms. The latter was laughing and in high glee; but when he saw the lugubrious look upon Nelson's face, his own suddenly assumed a grave expression.

"What is up?" he asked.

"I fear we are in a scrape."

"In a scrape?"

"Yes."

"How can we be in a scrape?"

"It's known what we did."

"It's known what we did?" repeated Ralph.

"Yes."

"What is known?"

"Our trick. Yes, sir, that fellow Tom Weir has got on to us, and he has threatened to expose us."

"Expose us?"

"Yes."

"What can he expose?"

"You know what we did."

"What did we do?"

"We got Hiram Perkins drunk."

"Nonsense! How could we get him drunk?"

"We gave him the liquor."

"Who knows it?"

"Tom Weir knows it."

"That's all nonsense!"

"It is true."

"We can deny it."

"No, we can not. He has the proofs, and if he blows on us you and I will be expelled from

the academy as sure as our names are Ward and Rolando!"

"That's all nonsense!"

"No, it is not all nonsense."

"They would not dare expel me."

"They wouldn't, eh? I tell you they would expel the son of the President of the United States under the same circumstances."

Rolando began to look rather blue, and asked:

"Has he threatened to expose us?"

Nelson Ward related all that had occurred, and Ralph listened attentively, and when the story was ended he said:

"By George! that sneak has laid for us."

"He did, that's certain."

"And what will we do?"

"We can wait, but we can not lose the information we received."

"But you did lose it."

"Just once; and I got the warning."

"What can we do now?"

"We will wait until the whole matter blows over and then we can go for him."

## CHAPTER XII.

"I DON'T see what we will gain by waiting," said Ralph, in an anxious tone.

"Oh, yes; after a few weeks he would not dare revive the affair—it would be called a conspiracy. He would know that, and he would not dare tell the story after an interval, so all we have to do is lay low, and then we can give him all the bootblack he needs."

"We can tell it around now."

"No, not for the world. I will tell him tomorrow we will keep 'mum,' and make him promise to do so, and then in good time we will let the thing go."

On the day following the incidents we have recorded, Nelson Ward met Tom Weir, and actually begged him not to report the affair.

"You are a mean fellow, Ward; but I will promise not to say anything about it."

"And we will promise not to say anything about what Hiram Perkins told us."

Tom really did not care if they did part with the information; but still he accepted their promise of silence.

The meeting had taken place early in the morning, and Tom retired to the room where Hiram still slept, and, after thinking the matter over, he determined to awake his friend.

When Hiram unclosed his eyes he looked around in a dazed manner, and then asked:

"Where am I?"

"You are in your bed."

"Where have I been?"

"Do you remember where you were last?"

"Let me see—yes; I was down to Rolando's rooms. But where have I been in the meantime? I feel so queer!"

"Do you?"

"Yes; my head is as light as a feather. Have I been sick?"

"Yes, a little sick."

"Have I been out of my head?"

"Yes, you have been a little delirious."

"How long have I been sick?"

"I will tell you all about it later on; in the meantime, what do you remember?"

"I don't remember anything."

"I mean, what do you remember up to the time the accident happened?"

"Did an accident happen to me?"

"Yes."

"Tell me all about it."

"You will tell me first what you remember."

Hiram thought a few moments, and then, as his thoughts became clearer, he said:

"I remember being down in Ralph's room."

"And what happened there?"

"He talked about putting me on the nine."

"Well?"

"And he was very good, and he said he might put you on also."

"And he gave you some lemonade to drink?"

"No. Let me see—not lemonade, but some cordial or syrup—something they make down in Cuba."

"And what did he call it?"

"He called it a syrup."

"Was it nice?"

"Oh, I remember now—it was delightful!"

"And you drank a good deal of it?"

"Yes, I did."

Hiram, said Tom, "all the accident that happened to you is you have been drunk."

"I've been drunk?"

"Yes—dead drunk."

"What do you mean?"

"You were tricked."

"Tricked?"

"Yes."

"Who tricked me?"

"Rolando and Ward."

"Tell me just what you mean?"

"That syrup was really liquor."

"Liquor?"

"Yes."

"Nonsense! I never drank a drop of liquor in my life."

"And that is why you proved such an easy victim. I tell you that you were deliberately tricked."

"How tricked?"

"They made you drunk."

"Who made me drunk?"

"Rolando and Ward made you drunk. Can you not understand?"

"I can not."

"Just think now, and, mark my words, they had a design. They got you down to the rooms on purpose to play a trick on you. They gave you what they called a syrup, but it was really a strong liquor."

"Is that true?"

"Yes."

"And when did this happen?"

"Last night."

"And how did I reach home?"

"Ward brought you home, and I put you to bed, and I have slept here in your room with you."

"They made me drunk?"

"Yes."

"And Ward brought me home?"

"Yes."

"What was their purpose?"

"Can you not discern?"

"I think I can."

"Well, what do you suspect?"

"They wanted to get me expelled."

"No."

"Do you know their purpose?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"They wanted to make you talk."

"Make me talk?"

"Yes."

"How talk?"

"They wanted you to tell your secret."

"What secret?"

"What you know about me. They thought if you got drunk you would tell all you know about me."

"That was their design, eh?"

"Yes."

"They failed."

"They did?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because I knew better than to say a word."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Poor fellow! You do not know what you did; you were too far gone."

"Too far gone?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Your wits were all blinded—you were dazed with liquor."

"But I would know better than to talk."

"On the contrary, you told them all they desired to know. Their trick was successful so far."

"I told them all they desired to know?"

"Yes."

"Nonsense!"

"You did."

"What did I tell them?"

"You told them I was once a bootblack, and that is what they desired to find out."

"It's false!"

"Wait, and I will prove it is a fact."

## CHAPTER XIII.

"HIRAM," said Tom, "this whole affair was what we call in New York among the boys a 'put-up job.' That fellow never had any idea of putting you on the nine; they flattered you to get you down there, and then they piled you with wine, calling it a harmless cordial. It went to your head; you lost your wits and told them all they desired, and they intended to have a laugh on you, but I rather think I've put a check on them for the present."

"I told them everything?"

"Yes."

"It can not be."

"It is true."

"I must have been mad!"

"You were wildly intoxicated."



"Are you sure I told them all?"

"Yes."

"How did you find it out?"

Tom related what had escaped Nelson Ward's lips when he met him in the hall.

Hiram was thoughtful a moment and then said:

"Tom, I will never forgive myself."

"My dear fellow, it's all right. You need not think anything about it. They are two mean schemers. They have set out to make war against me, and under all the circumstances—even the disgrace of your condition last night—I am glad the thing has occurred; but it is more disgraceful to them than to you. We know now exactly where they stand, and some day their meanness will come home to them. We will have trouble with those fellows."

"I wish I were as strong and courageous as you are, Tom."

"Why?"

"I'd thrash this Ralph Rolando."

"I reckon he'll get a thrashing before he gets through. Now, let me tell you something. You keep away from those fellows. They will combine together and put up some job, but if they get the best of me in the end it will be because I am asleep, that's all."

"But they will report me, and have me expelled."

"Not this trip."

"Why not?"

"Because I am on to their game. They dare not report you, and will be more anxious to keep the matter quiet than we are. But they will seek to harm us some way; but I will have an eye on them, and they will run up against a snag in the end, and don't you forget it, chum-mie!"

Tom got Hiram in shape, and the lad took his place in the classes during the day. He appeared timid and shamefaced; but as no one outside of those mentioned knew of his escapade, he escaped all criticism. After school Ward approached him, and said:

"Hiram, Ralph Rolando is very sorry for what occurred last night."

"He should be."

"He made a mistake."

"It was a mean thing."

"It would have been had he intended to fool you; but he really did make a mistake. He thought he was giving you a cordial, and did not learn until too late that he had made a blunder."

"He will never convince me it was a blunder."

"You must believe my word."

"We will say no more about it."

"Ralph will try hard to put you on the nine."

"I will not go on the nine; I will go on the new nine."

"The new nine?"

"Yes."

"Is there to be another nine?"

"You wait and see."

That same afternoon Tom Weir went down to the pond to skate. There had come up a sudden cold snap, and the shallow ponds around had been frozen over. Our hero was a splendid skater. During his stay up in the country he had learned to skate, and he was one of those lads who excel in most everything they undertake. There are many just such bright fellows to be met with—boys who are naturally so smart that they appear to possess great accomplishments in every direction.

Nearly all the students were down on the ice, and among them Ralph Rolando and his friend Nelson Ward, and a large number of the girls were also on the ice. Myra Hubbard was the queen of the lady skaters. She was a native of the town, and had been a skater ever since she had been large enough to put on the steels. Until the appearance of Tom, Ralph Rolando had been the champion among the students. The Cuban-American, like our hero, was naturally a very bright fellow—just the sort to excel in almost anything he undertook—and as he glided off on the glittering ice, in the presence of all the merry girls, he felt that there was one accomplishment in which he could not be surpassed.

Tom did not put on his skates immediately, but stood a long while watching the others, and he perceived that Ralph was an excellent skater, and he also admired the graceful skill of Myra Hubbard, and quite naturally, Myra and Ralph skated together, and all hands admired their grace and skill.

Myra, we will state, was the daughter of a re-

tired manufacturer, a gentleman of immense wealth. He was what is termed a self-made man. He had started in life as the son of a poor mill hand, and had become the owner, after many years, of the mill where he started as a lad in the meanest capacity, and, as is commonly the case, he was a man who later in life developed a fine literary taste. Myra was his only child, and it was well known that she would some day be the richest young lady in the state. This fact alone would have made her very popular, but when it is stated that she was singularly beautiful and strangely unassuming as far as wealth and position were concerned, her claim to popularity can well be understood.

From the very first moment after his meeting with Myra, Ralph Rolando had been, as the boys say, "clean gone on her," and it was rumored also that Myra was not averse to his attentions, and Ralph had received favors from Mr. Hubbard that had been accorded to but few students, and, as the founder of the academy, Mr. Hubbard was a powerful man in all the affairs of the institution.

Tom Weir had learned all these facts, but he gave them but little thought. He was more than modest as far as society was concerned, and, besides, he was very ambitious, and determined to devote himself strictly to study.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Tom saw Myra and Ralph gliding along over the ice a little spark of envy did arise in his heart. He was a lad of warm and ardent impulses, and Myra was so beautiful and so merry and looked so charming, her blue eyes shining like stars and her cheeks like roses under the excitement of the delightful exercise. Indeed, so charmed was our hero he stood a long time lost in admiration.

Meantime Ralph and Myra glided along here and there over the glassy surface.

"Have you made the acquaintance of the new student yet?" asked Myra, as the two glided near the spot where Tom stood.

"No, and I do not care to make his acquaintance."

"Why not?"

"I have my reasons."

"I should think you would be proud to make his acquaintance."

"Why?"

"He is surely a handsome fellow, and they say he is so manly and brave."

Ralph flushed with anger. He would have given almost anything to have known that Myra had thus expressed herself concerning himself, and he hated our hero all the more upon hearing such encomiums falling from such lovely lips.

"I wish you would not talk to me about that fellow, Myra," said Ralph.

"Why not?"

"Do not ask me."

"Is there any reason why you do not wish to speak of him?"

"Yes; there is good reason why I do not wish to speak of him."

Myra was an aggravating little beauty, and very bold and free spoken, and she asked:

"Are you really jealous of him?"

"Jealous of him?" repeated Ralph, in a disdainful tone. "No; I am not."

"It would appear so."

"Why should I be jealous?"

"He is so handsome and brave, and I wish he would put on his skates. I shouldn't be surprised if he was a splendid skater."

"What makes you think so?"

"He looks like one of those boys who is an expert at everything."

"But he dare not put on his skates. I'll bet you he is very awkward."

At that moment they were passing near our hero again, and it was observed that he had commenced to put on his skates.

"There!" said Myra, "he is going to skate."

"Good! I'll be glad to see him!"

Ralph was really an expert, and was really glad that Tom was to go on the ice, as the Cuban-American did not believe it possible that there was a lad in the state who could excel him.

The two glided off to a remote corner of the pond or lake, and Myra said:

"I should think you would be glad to welcome this young student, Ralph."

"Myra, I do not want to say anything."

Ralph spoke in a significant and meaning tone. Myra was a very bright and discerning girl, and she at once inquired:

"Do you know anything against him?"

"Don't compel me to speak!"

"Yes, I want you to speak."

"Why?"

"I don't care if I tell you right out."

"Yes, do."

"I admire him very much, and I would like to make his acquaintance."

"I'll tell you, then, but you must not tell any one else."

"Tell me."

"You promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"He is a very low fellow. You know I live in New York when I am at home. This fellow is an orphan, he is a sort of charity student, sent here by some rich man who took pity on him."

"Is that all there is against him?" demanded Myra, quickly.

"Is not that enough?"

"I should think if I were a rich boy like you I'd take right up with a young lad like that and encourage him."

"You forget that I have a social position to maintain. And now again I ask you to promise not to reveal what I say and I will tell you more."

"I will keep your secret."

"He was once a bootblack in New York—yes, a bootblack on the streets."

There came a troubled look to Myra's face, and she said, after an interval:

"Is that really a fact?"

"Yes; and now you know why I do not take to him."

"I do not see as that is any reason why you should refuse to encourage him—but I am really surprised. He does not look like an ex-bootblack—he looks more like a prince. Do you know I think he is the handsomest boy I ever saw."

"Well, yes, he has a handsome face. I will admit that."

"He has such delicate features, such beautiful eyes, and such a nice expression."

"Ah, there's the trouble—his looks are deceiving."

"His looks are deceiving?"

"Yes; if it was only that he was once a bootblack I would not mind it, but he is a low, vicious fellow, a quarrelsome boy, awfully hateful."

"He does not look so; his expression is awfully sweet."

"You will find him out some day. He wants to fight every one. He has already sought to quarrel with me. I wanted to be kind to him, but he is so envious. He received my advances in an insulting manner, and I was compelled to let him alone."

"You surprise me; but I would not be discouraged—he may be sensitive."

"He is ugly, that's what's the matter with him. He is naturally ugly."

"Does he know that you possess his secret?"

"I suspect he thinks I know all about him."

"And you will not tell any one what you have told me?"

"Certainly not. I'll throw over him the charity of silence."

"That is real good of you, Ralph. I am really sorry for him, and I hope you will try and be friends with him, and you may do him much good."

"You ask me to perform a very disagreeable task."

"But you may accomplish a great deal of good."

"I'd do almost anything to oblige—"

"Look there!" suddenly cried Myra.

Tom Weir had struck off over the ice.

#### CHAPTER XV.

THE very moment Ralph's eyes fell on Tom there arose in his heart a feeling of intense bitterness.

"He is an elegant skater," cried Myra, "and I thought so."

"He is a good straight-away skater," said Ralph.

Tom glided away to where there was a clear spot, and he commenced to perform various evolutions, and soon skaters from all over the pond glided over to see his performances.

"Let's go and see him!" said Myra.

"I don't care to go."

"Nonsense! Come along, Ralph. Do not be jealous; you can beat him. No one can skate like you; but he may show you some new figures. Come and learn."



"I don't care to go." "I'll go," cried Myra, and she glided away toward the circle that surrounded Tom.

Our hero was not a boy to show off, and the moment he discovered how much attention he was attracting he started to skate off; but one of the tutors, Mr. Hamilton, who was quite an expert, arrived at that moment, and asked Tom to show them some figures.

Tom was an obliging fellow, and did lead off with several very difficult feats.

Several of the boys with Mr. Hamilton tried them, but all failed or made but sorry attempts, and, still encouraged, Tom performed some still more difficult feats, and one of the boys called out:

"Where's Ralph Rolando?"

Nelson Ward had been among the lads, and when the inquiry came he started off to where Ralph was gliding around in a circle, and upon reaching his friend he exclaimed:

"Have you seen that fellow skate?"

"Who?"

"The bootblack."

"Hold on, Nelson; you must not give that away."

"Only to you. But have you seen him?"

"No."

"By George! he's a wonder! To tell the truth, you're nowhere; and they are shouting for you."

"Shouting for me?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Some of the boys; they want you to try some of his figures. But don't you go there; he can beat you all to bottom."

"Hang him! I wish he'd never come here."

"So do I. Myra Hubbard is there and loud in her praise. I heard her say she wished you would come over. She thinks you can beat him, but I know better. Don't you go."

Some of the lads were glancing over toward Ralph, and Nelson Ward said:

"Take off your skates, and that will be an excuse. Do not let that fellow beat you."

Ralph was glad to take the hint, and he started for the shore just as some of the students came up.

"Come over, Ralph!" they cried.

"Where?"

"To see this new fellow skate—he's a wonder!"

"I'm tired; I fear I've caught a cold."

"You should come over and skate against him. You can take him down!" said one of the boys.

"I can't go now."

"You should come and take the airs all out of him."

"Some other time."

"You can beat him."

Another boy, however, retorted:

"No, Ralph can't beat him. He's the best skater in the school—that's certain. Yes, he's the best skater I have ever seen."

Ralph glided over toward the shore and commenced removing his skates, and Nelson Ward accompanied him, and also removed his skates, and as the two walked away Nelse said:

"That fellow is a nuisance. Hang it! he will carry the boys all with him if we don't look out. I've a good mind to tell the truth about him at once."

"No; you must keep silent."

"But it makes me mad to see Myra Hubbard so carried away with him. You ought to tell her."

"What good would that do?"

"It would open her eyes."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"But you say she is applauding him."

"Yes, she is; and cries 'splendid' louder than any one else."

"She does?"

"Yes."

Ralph was thoughtful and silent, and Nelson said:

"I'd tell her if I were you."

"Would you really?"

"Yes, I would."

"I did tell her."

"You did?"

"Yes."

Nelse stared in amazement.

"Did you tell her all?"

"Yes."

"That he is an ex-bootblack?"

"Yes."

"Hang it! the girl is crazy; she is all gone!"

"What do you mean?"

"I tell you she shows her admiration right out."

"Shut up, Nelse."

"It's true, and if I were you I'd tell everybody the truth."

"I can't."

"You can't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I've promised not to tell."

"But what odds does that promise make? Let's tell and take the chances. We can deny the other thing."

"But I've promised some one else."

"You've promised some one else?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Some one."

Nelse was silent a moment, and then cried out, as an idea struck him:

"Did Myra make you promise?"

"Yes."

"The girl's a fool!"

"She made me promise."

"I wouldn't have promised."

"She made me."

"Hang it! We'll have to drown that fellow!"

"Yes, we will, Nelse. We'll do something to get him out of the way," said Ralph.

## CHAPTER XVI.

NELSON WARD and Ralph Rolando were two mad and disgruntled youths. The new student appeared to be their *bête noire* at everything—he appeared to excel in everything he undertook, and this last exhibition of his marvelous skill as a skater, to use a boy's term, completely "broke them up."

Meantime our hero completed his exhibition. He had shown a reluctance in giving it, but Mr. Hamilton had led him on, and when Tom finally skated away he was greeted with a round of applause.

Later on in the evening nothing else was talked about save the wonderful skill of the new student.

In the evening Perkins entered our hero's room, and said:

"Well, you've been at it again."

"How?"

"I have heard you drove Ralph Rolando off the lake."

"I did not drive him off the lake."

"The boys say you did."

"I did not intend to do so."

"Did you know that Rolando was considered the best skater in the state?"

"Possibly he is."

"No, no; the boys say you beat him all hollow. You beat him at everything, and I tell you he will hate you, and an idea has just come to me."

"Well?"

"That fellow has Spanish blood in him."

"He is a Cuban, I believe."

"His father was a Cuban; but he was born in New York, and to-day I heard something, and if he calls you bootblack we can get back on him."

"How?"

Perkins hesitated, but after a moment said:

"Mind, I do not vouch for the truth of what I say."

"No."

"You have seen the blacksmith of the village?"

"Yes."

"He is a bitter fellow."

"Well?"

"He does not like Rolando; and to-day I heard him say, 'I'll bet a big apple there is negro blood in that fellow Rolando.'"

"It was a mean thing to say."

"I know it; but he is going to say mean things about you."

"What he may say about me might be true."

"And it may be the truth what the blacksmith said."

"I do not believe it."

"Rolando is very dark."

"Bah! I will not listen to any such slander; and if you wish to remain a friend of mine you must not on any account repeat what you have said to me."

"But suppose he slanders you?"

"No matter what he may do to me, I can take care of myself; but I will never recognize any one who circulates such a vile slander about Ralph Rolando."

"Has he made friends with you?"

"No, and I do not believe he ever will."

Winter passed, and during that time the students were all kept pretty steadily at their books; but at the end of each week there came a regular holiday, and a challenge had been sent out by the regular nine to play a scrub nine a game of ball. A nine had been hastily organized; eight men were secured, and a ninth was needed. The eight were holding a meeting and discussing the securing of the ninth man, when Hiram Perkins said:

"I know a good player."

"What's his name?"

"The Duke of New York."

"You mean the new student?"

"Yes."

"Can he play ball?"

"He can do anything."

"I'd rather get some one else," said the captain of the new nine.

"Why?"

"There is a prejudice against this Tom Weir."

Several of the other lads at once cried out:

"We want to win, don't we?"

"Yes, we do."

"I'll tell you what I've heard: they are betting that the regular nine will beat us in one inning."

"I know something else," said another boy; "some of the girls are offering to bet bouquets and boxes of candy that Rolando's nine will beat us three to one."

"I suppose they will!" came the answer from the captain. "We have no right to hope to beat a nine that is so well organized, and where the players work so well together as a team."

"If Tom Weir plays I think we can beat them," said Hiram.

"Is he such a good player?"

"He is a splendid player."

"What position does he play?"

"He plays any position."

"How do you know?"

"Never mind; you can take my word for it."

"Let's ask him to play," came a chorus of voices.

"All right," at length assented the captain.

Henry Hurlburt, the captain of the scrub nine, in his heart disliked Ralph Rolando, but he was afraid of the popular student.

Hurlburt was a reticent sort of fellow, very deep and cunning. He really desired to win, and really desired to secure Tom Weir for his nine, but he was playing off, as the boys say, leaving a loop-hole—reserving a chance to declare that he had opposed putting the new student on the nine.

We have a second statement to make as concerns this Henry Hurlburt. He was, like Ralph Rolando, dead in love with Myra Hubbard, but he did not dare betray his admiration. He worshiped her from a distance. He had rarely spoken to her. He did not dare trust himself to do so—he feared he might betray himself.

While pretending to like Ralph Rolando as a friend, the real truth was he hated the tall Cuban-American with an intensity that was devouring him, and yet he feared him.

Henry Hurlburt, like Hiram Perkins, was the son of a poor farmer, and he stood in awe of the son of the millionaire Cuban.

Ralph had several times snubbed Hurlburt, but the latter had thought it best not to notice these sneers, but he treasured a memory of them in his heart all the same, and made up his mind that some day he would get square.

Rolando's team was the pride of the village. The sporting men of the town had won many bets on the college team, and its captain was a hero with them. Ralph was really a good player. He was what is called an all-round man, and he was especially strong as a pitcher, and it was his skillful handling of the ball that had gained the high reputation for his nine.

It was finally decided that Tom Weir should be invited to join the nine, and when the boys separated Henry Hurlburt walked away with Perkins. The captain had a scheme in his mind.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN the two boys were alone, Henry said: "Hiram, the boys appointed me a committee of one to see this Tom Weir."

"Yes?"

"I want you to act for me."

"But you are not acquainted with him."

"That is the reason I want you to act."

"Why not see him yourself?"



"I will later on."  
 "But you must know him."  
 "Yes, you can introduce me."  
 "I will do it now."  
 "No; you must introduce me on the field."  
 Hiram did not get on to the scheme, as the saying goes, and answered:  
 "All right."  
 Perkins had no difficulty in finding Tom Weir. The latter spent much time in his rooms. He was a genuine student, and, like the busy bee, was improving every shining hour.  
 "Halloo! Tom, can I come in?"  
 "Yes, old boy, come in."  
 Hiram entered our hero's room and said:  
 "I'm a committee of one to tell you something, and bear you an invitation."  
 "Go ahead, old fellow."  
 "There is to be a ball match."  
 "So I have heard."  
 "Between the regulars and a selected nine."  
 "Yes, I have heard about it."  
 "You have been selected to play on the picked nine."  
 "I have been selected?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Who selected me?"  
 "The captain."  
 "Who is the captain?"  
 "Henry Hurlburt."  
 "How did he come to select me? I do not know him to speak to him."  
 "Well, the boys demanded your selection."  
 "They did?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How did they happen to demand it?"  
 "You must ask them."  
 "No, I prefer to ask you."  
 "Oh, nonsense!"  
 "You proposed my name?"  
 "I'll tell you."  
 "Yes, do."  
 "You see they were stuck—they did not have a ninth man, and I merely suggested your name, and it was received with acclamation."  
 "It was?"  
 "Yes."  
 "What do they know about me?"  
 "Probably they suppose that as you are so good at everything else they imagine as a matter of course you are a great ball player."  
 "I'd rather not play."  
 "Why?"  
 "I want my time."  
 "It will cause great disappointment if you do not play."  
 "I can not aid the nine much."  
 "I know you are a good player."  
 "You do?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How is it you know so much about a new man?"  
 "Well, you are."  
 "See here, Hiram, it isn't good judgment for me to play."  
 "Why not?"  
 "I do not desire to provoke this fellow Rolando more than is necessary."  
 "You ought to down him whenever you can."  
 "He may make it unpleasant for your friend Hurlburt."  
 "How?"  
 "He may object to me as a player."  
 "He can not object, and I want you to play."  
 "I tell you I will not help the nine much."  
 "I want you to play, anyhow."  
 "Why are you so anxious?"  
 "I'll tell you: our nine is looked upon with so much contempt."  
 "It is?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Why?"  
 "They are betting against us and laughing at us."  
 "Who?"  
 "Almost every one—especially the girls."  
 "The girls?"  
 "Yes."  
 "What do they know about base-ball?"  
 "They have all the points down, you bet, and I am told that Myra Hubbard is saying that we will be beaten in one inning, and some of the girls are to bet bouquets and boxes of candy that we will be beaten three to one."  
 "That would be a bad beating."  
 "Yes."  
 "Why did not Hurlburt come and ask me himself?"  
 "Because he did not know you well enough."

"You could have introduced me."  
 "I will."  
 "When?"  
 "On the field."  
 "Why did he not come and be introduced to-day?"  
 "He is busy getting ready for the match."  
 "I'll play, Hiram, but I do wish I had not been put on the nine."  
 That same afternoon it went abroad that the Duke of New York was to play on the team, and the news reached Nelson Ward, who ran to talk the news over with Ralph, and when he met the latter he asked:  
 "Have you heard the news?"  
 "What news?"  
 "That fellow is to play on the selected nine."  
 "Weir?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Who asked him to play?"  
 "Hurlburt, I suppose."  
 "Hang him!"  
 "But I am glad he is going to play."  
 "Why?"  
 "You are pitcher?"  
 "Yes."  
 "You can make a show of him."  
 "There may be something in that."  
 "You bet; this is your opportunity. Hang him! he can not be the best at everything, and just once we've got him."  
 "Possibly you're right. I'll bother him, and if he makes a base hit off me I'll eat the ball."

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

THE base-ball match was the talk not only of the town, but the surrounding country. Old and young, women and men, were all more or less interested in the match.  
 Ralph Rolando's regular seminary nine had won a great reputation, and Ralph was recognized as what is known as a phenomenal pitcher. He pitched a wonderfully swift ball, and was also master of all the curve tricks, and besides, he was recognized as a pitcher possessing what is called a "good head." He was cool in critical emergencies, and his popularity as the captain of the nine was great. He was "in the swim," as far as popularity goes, and those who did not admire him were silent, while those who did were loud in their laudations of his skill.  
 As stated, when it became known that there was to be a second seminary nine, the excitement became great, and the adherents of the two nines began to range themselves on sides.  
 The large majority were enthusiastic over the first nine, and the others were silently hopeful as concerned the second nine; but there were visitors from neighboring towns, and the majority of the latter were ranged against Rolando's nine. Their own nines had been beaten by the seminary nine, and hoped to see them taken into camp. So upon the day when the match was to take place there was a large assemblage present, and the excitement was at fever heat.  
 At length the two nines appeared upon the field. The scrub nine were sent first to the field for the preliminary practice. They were greeted with applause as they advanced to their several positions, attired in brand-new uniforms.  
 Tom Weir had been assigned to center field. He had not been consulted as to his choice of position, and went to the one assigned without a word.  
 Just before entering the field Hiram and Tom exchanged a few words.  
 "You must not lose your head, Tom, if they 'guy' you a little."  
 "You need not fear for me, Hiram, my boy."  
 "I've a suspicion that they have set two or three parties to do so."  
 "So much the worse for them, I reckon."  
 "You must not lose your temper, Tom."  
 "Never fear. You look out for yourself. I'll do well enough."  
 The lads opened up well. The ball was sent out to the field, returned, and passed rapidly from base to base, and then sent home, and the crowd cheered and applauded in a hearty manner.  
 A "stinger" was sent to center field. There was some excitement. The eyes of all the students were fixed on the new player, Tom Weir. The latter let the ball pass through his fingers, and there followed a laugh and many comments.  
 Nelson Ward and Ralph Rolando were standing together, and both eagerly watched the ball as it went sailing out toward the person they so cordially hated, and when the ball glided be-

tween his fingers and went sailing over his head they laughed with the others, and Nelson Ward whispered:  
 "He's no good. I thought so. We'll send him leather-hunting, you bet."  
 "And I'll bother him when he comes to bat," whispered Ralph back to his friend.  
 Myra Hubbard was standing near by, and Ward walked over to her and said:  
 "They counted a good deal on that new player, but he's no good."  
 "How do you know?" asked Myra.  
 "He missed an easy ball."  
 "He may be a little nervous."  
 Myra, by her answer, showed how well she was up in the game.  
 "Good players don't get nervous."  
 "I've seen you miss a ball, Nelson Ward."  
 "And you think it was an accident?"  
 "It may have been."  
 "Well, there goes another for him—a regular fungo. Let's see what he'll do now."  
 Even as Ward spoke the ball went skimming up in the air, and fell right in Tom's hands; but he failed to hold it, and again there followed a laugh.  
 "What did I tell you?" said Ward, again addressing Myra.  
 "Wait till the game commences," said the girl.  
 Henry Hurlburt had been watching the play of his nine, and he sought an opportunity to say to Hiram Perkins:  
 "We're going to be weak in center field. Your friend Weir is no good."  
 "He may be a little nervous."  
 Hiram had seen Tom miss the two "flies," and he felt disappointed.  
 "If he is nervous in practice he'll go all to pieces when the game commences. I've a mind to send in the substitute."  
 "Take my advice and don't do it."  
 "But the other fellows are playing so well we may win the game if we have a good center fielder."  
 "Weir will be all right, you mark my words."  
 A third ball was sent to Tom, and for the third time he let it pass through his fingers.  
 "By ginger! that won't do at all," said Hurlburt.  
 At this moment the signal was given for the regular seminary nine to take their places for practice, and they walked on the field under a perfect ovation of applause, and they looked like champions. When the ball was passed round they acted like men who thought they had what the boys call "a soft thing."  
 "I'll change Weir," said Hurlburt.  
 "Don't you do it, Hurlburt."  
 "But we'll lose the game through him."  
 "Give him a chance, and if he fails you can change him later on. I'll give him the tip to get hurt."  
 "It may be too late."  
 "But it will be a disgrace to change him without a chance."  
 "Not so much a disgrace as to change him afterward."  
 "He may deserve it then, he does not now."  
 "All right, I'll let him play; but we'll lose the game."  
 The regulars played nicely during their practice. Ralph went to center field and took several balls that were sent out to him, and Ward walked over to Myra, and said:  
 "There's a player for you—nothing passes through his hands."  
 Henry Hurlburt was standing near by and overheard the remark, and it stung him. He was jealous of Ralph in just that direction, and he again resolved to change Tom Weir off the nine. Meantime Myra had remarked:  
 "You wait until the regular game commences."  
 "Nonsense!" retorted Ward. "Rolando's team will annihilate them. I doubt if they will get a run."  
 "I'll bet you a box of candy the scrub nine wins," pluckily cried Myra.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

HENRY HURLBURT overheard the offer of the wager and so did Tom Weir, and there came a strange look in his eyes and a flush to his face.  
 "I don't want to make a bet with a lady," said Nelson Ward.  
 "You dare not!" came the taunting reply.  
 "The chances are dead against you. I'll tell you what I will do, Myra: I'll bet you the regulars beat these fellows in one inning."



"How do you mean?"

"I mean the regulars will make more runs in one inning than the others make in the whole game."

"That is what you call giving odds?"

"Yes."

"I don't care for any advantage; I'll bet you as I first proposed."

"I will not bet you, Myra; it would not be fair."

"If you won't bet, don't talk!" said the beautiful girl, with a merry laugh.

Henry Hurlburt sought Hiram Perkins. His heart was thumping wildly.

"Hiram," he said, "I'd like to talk a few moments to Weir; will you bring him to me?"

"Are you going to change him?"

"I only want to talk to him."

Hiram went to Tom and said:

"Tom, you had bad luck."

"Did I?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You missed three balls in succession."

Tom laughed in a significant manner but made no reply.

"Hurlburt wants to speak to you."

"All right."

"He may ask you to let the substitute play in your place."

"Well?"

"What do you think?"

"How do you want me to take it?"

"Have you confidence in yourself?"

"I reckon I have."

"Then don't agree to go off."

"Can he order me off?"

"I don't know; I think not, as the names have been passed to the umpire."

"He will be compelled to let me play?"

"Yes, I think so; although if you ask to go off the other captain may consent to the change."

"We will see what our captain has to say."

Hiram led Tom over and introduced him to Henry, and the latter said:

"Weir, it was hardly fair to ask you to play."

"Why?"

"You are a new-comer, and naturally very nervous."

"I think I can get along well enough."

"I'd like to win the game."

"I'd like to see you win."

"Would you, really?"

"Yes."

"Would you be willing to let me send in a substitute?"

"Yes—certainly."

"You will not be offended?"

"Not at all."

Hiram protested.

"I don't think it's right, Henry."

"Your friend is willing."

"Certainly I am," said Tom.

"And you will not feel bad?"

"No; I think it's the best thing to do."

"I will have to get Rolando's consent," said Henry. "And now let us understand each other. You are perfectly content?"

"I am; yes, certainly."

Henry walked away, and Hiram said to Tom:

"I'm real mad."

"Why?"

"I wanted you to play."

"I'll play."

"But you told him you would go off."

"I know it; and I knew just what I was about."

"But if you consent to go off, how can you play?"

Tom laughed, and winked, and said:

"It will be all right."

"I'll be shot if I can understand what you are up to!"

"I'll play, Hiram."

"But you said you would go off."

"Yes."

"Then how will you play?"

"Rolando must consent to the change."

"Of course."

"He never will."

"By jingo! I did not think of that."

"He would not consent to a change for a thousand dollars."

"You're right. See, he is shaking his head negatively now, and Henry is urging him."

"Of course; and, don't you see, I've shown the proper accommodating spirit to Henry, and I'll play all the same, thanks to Rolando."

"Probably it will be better, after all, if you do not play."

"Why?"

"You are not in good form."

Again there came a twinkle to Tom's eyes.

"Rolando will have the laugh on you, and when you come up to the bat he will make a show of you."

"Will he?"

"Yes, and he is laying for the chance."

"All right, I can stand it."

Hiram observed at length a singular confidence in his friend, and he said:

"You're up to something."

"Oh, no; but I'll be all right, and don't you forget it!"

"If you ain't nervous you may come out all right."

"My nerve is all right."

"Well, you know."

"I do."

While the above conversation was in progress Henry Hurlburt had been talking to Ralph. He approached the opposing captain, and said:

"Ralph, I want to ask a favor."

"Go ahead."

"I want to change one of my players."

"Which one?"

"Tom Weir."

"Why did you put him on?"

"I was asked to do so."

"It's too late to make a change."

"Why?"

"The names of the players, in their order, have been given to the umpire."

"We can make the change if you consent."

"I can not consent."

"Why not?"

"It would not be right."

"Why not, I'd like to know?"

"I can't do it."

"You ought to be glad to win on your merits."

"That's all right; but you knew what you were about when you put that fellow on."

"And you refuse to permit the change?"

"Yes, I do."

## CHAPTER XX.

HENRY HURLBURT was mad. He considered Ralph had acted real mean, and it was true under all the circumstances Rolando had acted mean, and yet the young fellow could not let go the opportunity of triumphing over the new student, who had excelled him in several other directions.

"I'll make a show of him!" he muttered, and when Ward came along the latter said:

"What's up?"

"Henry wants to take the fellow Weir off his team and put in the substitute."

"You did not consent?"

"No."

"You're right; you would have been a goose. That fellow's no good, and you can make a show of him."

"You bet I will."

"And I've set the boys up to 'guy' him."

"That's right. We may give him such a 'showing up' as will cause him to 'git.'"

"It would be just jolly if we could."

"Do you know Myra Hubbard offered to bet me the scrub nine would win?"

"What's she thinking of, I'd like to know?"

"I can tell you."

"Well?"

"She's gone on the handsome face of that fellow."

"Hang the fellow!"

"She makes excuses for his blunders."

"She does, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, she will have to make a good many before this game is ended to-day."

"You bet! Oh, golly! won't I enjoy seeing you 'show him up.'"

"I'll make him appear like a fool. It was cheek for him to enter the other nine, but he's got cheek. He thinks he's something big, but we'll take him down a peg."

Henry Hurlburt, meantime, was very sore. He really believed his nine could win if it were not for his Jonah.

"Hang it!" he muttered, "I must take him, and it would be a joke if he were to make the winning run. I wish he could, but then he's no player, and he'll swamp us. I must get him to pretend he's injured in the first inning, and the umpire will order him off, and let me put on a substitute."

Henry approached Hiram and Tom and said:

"You'll have to play, Weir."

"Why?"

"Rolando won't let you off."

"Why not?"

"I'll tell you, he wants to win."

"He does, eh?"

"Yes."

"And thinks I'll lose the game?"

"Yes; and now we can fix him yet."

"How?"

"You can manage to get hurt in the first in-

ning."

"Well?"

"And then the umpire will let me put in a substitute."

"Not in the first inning."

"Oh, yes, if you manage to get hurt pretty bad."

Tom smiled, and said:

"You leave it to me."

"Can you do it?"

"You shall not lose this game through me."

Henry understood Tom to mean that he would follow instructions about getting hurt, and said:

"You are a good fellow, Weir, and I'll never forget this good turn."

"You are very anxious to win?"

"Yes, especially since Ralph has acted so meanly."

"He'll be sorry," said Tom, in a quiet tone.

"Yes; we can fool him yet."

"You bet we will!" said Tom.

"I'm your friend, Tom Weir."

"Thank you."

Henry walked away, and Hiram said:

"What are you going to do, Tom?"

"Oh, I'll do what is right."

"And will you get hurt?"

"You wait and see."

"I wouldn't do it in the first inning."

"Why not?"

"You may get your nerve back and play a good game."

"That's so."

"Then you won't get hurt at first?"

"May be not."

"I'd like to see you play through the game."

"Would you?"

"I would. I'd rather go off the nine myself."

"But you're a good player."

"We can't beat those fellows, but I'd like to give them a close game."

"You think we can't beat them?"

"I do."

"Why not?"

"They are all in good form, and I will say that Rolando is a dandy pitcher. He's hard to beat."

"Who pitches for our side?"

"Henry."

"How is he?"

"He is a good, steady pitcher, and has plenty of nerve."

"How was it he wasn't on the regular nine?"

"Rolando is jealous of him. I think he fears him."

"And you would really like to see our side win?"

"I'd go hungry for a month."

"And if we win?"

"Ah, we can't!"

"We can't, eh?"

"No, it is impossible."

"What makes you think so?"

"They're too heavy for us."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"We've got the best catcher."

"How do you know?"

"I watched our man, and I've been watching the other fellow."

"And ours is the better?"

"Yes; and, Hiram, you will see some fun before this game is over."

## CHAPTER XXI.

"YOU'RE a queer fellow, Tom," said Hiram. Tom again smiled in a pleasant manner and said:

"There's a dead-set against me, but it will come out all right."

Tom Weir walked away, and was passing a group of girls, when to his utter amazement one of the girls stepped forward and addressed him. The girl who thus came forward was Myra Hubbard.

"Excuse me," she said.

Tom came to a halt.

"I want to say one word."

"You are very kind," said Tom.

"My sympathies are with the new nine."



"You are very kind," again said Tom.  
 "I want to tell you not to be nervous. It's all right, even if you do lose."  
 "And you would like to see our nine win?"  
 "Yes—I'd be delighted."  
 "May I ask why?"  
 Myra blushed and hesitated.  
 "Please tell me why you would like to see our team win?"  
 "You won't repeat what I say?"  
 "Certainly not."  
 "Well, I do not like their air of confidence and the supercilious remarks they have made about your nine."  
 "They think they can beat us, I believe?"  
 "Yes; and the chances are they will. But I want you to play your best."  
 "You are very kind."  
 "Don't be afraid; go right in."  
 Myra spoke in an impetuous and energetic manner, and pantomimed with her pretty little hand when she said, "Go right in."  
 "If you won't tell, I'll let you into a secret," said Tom.  
 "Thank you."  
 "You won't tell?"  
 "No."  
 "We'll beat them!"  
 "You will beat them?"  
 "Yes—we'll win."  
 "How do you know?"  
 "I've sized both nines."  
 "What is that?"  
 "I'll explain: I've watched all the players, and the two nines are more evenly matched than some people think. The advantage is a little with the regulars, because they have been used to team work; but they are going in with overconfidence, and when we give them a good showing they will seek to secure the game, and will try too hard, and will become rattled, and we will win the game."  
 "You have studied it pretty closely."  
 "Yes, I have."  
 "I hope you are right."  
 "I will promise you that we will win the game."  
 "You will promise me?"  
 "Yes."  
 "You must have great confidence in yourself!"  
 "I've seen a great many games played. I am capable of judging. It's pretty nearly an even game under any circumstances. The facts I have revealed are as I say. You will find they will get rattled and go wild. Yes, I will promise you that we will win."  
 "I hope you will."  
 At this moment the signal was sounded, calling the regulars from practice, and Tom said:  
 "You will not repeat what I have said either before or after the game?"  
 "Why not after the game?"  
 "It may make enemies for me."  
 "I see; I will be silent."  
 Tom raised his hat and walked away. Henry Hurlburt again approached Ralph and said:  
 "Do you still refuse to let me make a change?"  
 "Yes, I do."  
 "Some day you may ask a favor of me."  
 "Refuse it."  
 "I will remember to-day's treatment most certainly."  
 "That will be all right. Your men go to the bat. I won the toss and choice."  
 "And you still refuse?"  
 "I do."  
 As Ralph spoke he walked off toward the field to take his position as pitcher.  
 Henry Hurlburt was the first man to the bat. He elected to go first to the bat in order to give greater confidence to his team. He was a good batter, but he was angry and discouraged because of Rolando's meanness.  
 The game was called, and a stillness settled over the field, and all was expectancy.  
 The first ball was wide and a ball was called. The second went over the plate, and a strike was called. The third was again wide. The fourth Henry struck at, and cut the air for another strike. The fifth was wide, and the sixth was missed, and Henry was out, and the pitcher received the usual applause.  
 The second man to the bat also struck out, and also the third man, and the scrub nine had score a "goose egg," and the applause for the regulars was simply terrific.  
 The first man of the regulars went to the bat and "tipped" out on the first ball, and Henry received a small round of applause. The second man at the bat for the regulars made a

clean base hit, and the applause was deafening, and the friends of the regulars were frenzied with delight as the batter gained his base.

The third batter of the regulars, however, raised a ball in the air; it was taken by the shortstop, who threw to first, catching the runner, and the regulars also retired, having scored a "goose egg."

The scrub batters went out in their order; not a base hit was scored, and the regulars again came to the plate.

The first batter for the regulars made a scratch hit and gained his base through a "fumble," and the laughter at the blunder and the applause for the batter and successful runner were mingled. The man on first ran to second on the first ball pitched and succeeded in gaining his base on another fumble, and the remark was heard:

"The regulars will wipe the field with them."

But the next batter struck out, and so did the succeeding one, and it was two out and one man on base. The next batter, however, scored a hit, and the first runner was advanced to third, and the second gained his first base, and the game stood: two men out and two men on bases when Ralph Rolando stepped to the plate.

## CHAPTER XXII.

For an instant there was a dead stillness, when Ralph, with a confident air and a look of determination, took his position. He went through the usual motions of a batsman who at a critical moment was determined to do or die. He rapped his bat on the plate to try its soundness; he grasped it firmly and then ran his hand over it, and finally settled into a position of grace and readiness.

The words passed from lip to lip:

"Now he's got 'em! It's two runs this time, certain. The men on first and third will come in, sure."

There was a determined look also on the face of Henry Hurlburt. He showed that he knew it was a critical moment, and he set himself for a fine exhibition of hard pitching.

Amid almost deathless silence the first ball was delivered. It was a wild ball, and the umpire called out ball against the pitcher, and then the murmured words were passed from mouth to mouth:

"He will give him a base; he dare not give him a good ball."

The catcher returned the ball to the pitcher; and the suppressed excitement was as great as though a hundred lives depended upon the outcome.

The pitcher gazed around upon the basemen and the outfielders and then fixed his eagle glance on the base-runners, and then quickly turning delivered the second ball.

Again the decision of the umpire was against him.

"Two balls," called the official of the day.  
 "I knew it—I knew it," repeated the wise ones. "He dare not give Ralph a ball; he's afraid of him. He'd rather give him a base."

What succeeded rather encouraged the idea that the batter had reached the same conclusion, for Henry sent in a swift curve over the plate, and the umpire called:

"One strike."

A murmur arose from the assemblage, and a little cheer followed from the friends of the scrub nine.

The fourth ball was delivered, and the decision came:

"Three balls."

Again came the wisecrackers with their comments.

"He daren't give him a ball."

Henry settled himself in the box and Ralph braced himself at the plate. It was business. One strike and three balls was the record. One more ball, and Ralph would take his base. The crowd awaited anxiously. Henry was very deliberate. He proved himself a pitcher of mettle. It was evident that he was determined not to become flurried.

The next ball went humming through the air. It was a fair ball. Ralph was ready for it. He caught the curving sphere on the end of his bat. He gave it a ripper, and away it flew out over the field.

A great shout arose. Men, women, boys and girls became frantic with excitement as the shout went up:

"A home run, and all in!"

But wait. Tom Weir was after the ball. He was on the run, his back to the field. The ball

was flying over his head. It was a desperate chase. The ball was descending; it was beyond his reach, as it appeared. But no. Suddenly turning, he reached up with one hand. There was a hush, and then a shout as the umpire declared:

"Batter out."

It was a wonderful catch, one of the most extraordinary catches, under all the circumstances, ever seen upon that particular field. The two runners had crossed the plate, and Ralph had almost made the circuit of the bases when the decision came, "Batter out."

A madder youth never stood and looked back over a field, and the shouts of the on-lookers maddened him all the more, as they were shouts of approval of the boy he hated.

A ball crowd is usually impartial and always ready to applaud a good play, and Tom's play was what is called a phenomenal one. It was indeed a marvelous catch, and it ended the inning and surely saved three runs.

Rolando's side was out, and the scrub boys walked in toward the plate as the regulars went to the field, and as Tom came in he was greeted with a fresh outburst of applause.

Nelson Ward, as he passed to his position, walked near to Ralph, and whispered:

"Curse that fellow!"

"Was it a good catch?" asked Ralph.

"A wonderful catch!"

"Only a scratch, I reckon."

"Don't send your next ball in his direction."

"Yes, I will."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He'll miss the next one, and then he'll get what he deserves."

"I don't know, Ralph; I'm afraid he's a daisy, and a deceiver."

"You mean he was playing off in the practice?"

"That's my idea."

"Wait until he comes to the bat."

"He goes to the plate first man this inning."

"Good! I'll make a show of him."

As Tom met the captain of his nine, the latter said:

"That was a bully catch, Weir."

"It was a lucky one."

"You did well; you saved three runs."

"If we mind ourselves, we'll win," said Tom.

"Do you think we can?"

"Yes."

"Batter up!" came the command from the umpire, and amid breathless silence Tom walked to the plate.

The first ball was wide and called against the pitcher; the second went over the plate, and caught the batter "napping," and there arose a murmur of applause for Ralph. The third ball went over the plate and a second time was the batter caught "napping," and again there arose a little applause. The fourth ball went fair. Tom struck; cut the air; the ball went into the catcher's hands. The umpire called out.

Tom walked away from the plate as the next batter faced the pitcher.

As our hero took his seat among the boys on the bench Hiram said to him:

"I was in hopes you'd get on to him, Tom."

"It's all right."

"He fooled you?"

"Yes."

"It would have been bully if you had sent a sockdolager after your catch."

"The game ain't over."

"They'll go for us soon, you bet."

"They haven't won yet."

"They'll do so, but we've given 'em a good fight."

"They will find the worst part of the battle is to come yet," remarked Tom, in a quiet, confident tone.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE immediate result hardly justified Tom's prediction, as the two batters following him went out on strikes, and Ralph had scored a high honor in striking out three batters successively, and as he walked in from the box he was greeted with applause, and he had well earned the enthusiastic recognition; but immediately after Henry Hurlburt won the same distinction, for he struck out three successive batters of the regulars, and he, too, received an enthusiastic recognition.

The assemblage, meantime, had come to realize that they were witnessing a magnificent com-



test, and the regulars had also come to feel that they had no "walk-over." They lost their confident air, and as they took their position showed that they began to appreciate the situation. They had no "easy thing of it," indeed, defeat or a draw game was among the possibilities if the scrub nine kept up their style of playing; and a defeat or even a draw game would be what the boys call a "black eye" for the regulars.

Again Ward approached Ralph and held a whispered talk.

"We must rattle 'em, Ralph."

"It's all luck on their part. They'll go to pieces pretty soon."

"Oh, we'll beat 'em, of course; but I wanted to make a show of 'em."

"So we will in the end."

"You are confident?"

"Certainly; they've had good luck."

"And we've had bad luck."

"Yes; that fellow getting on to that ball of mine was nothing but luck."

Hiram again approached Tom, and they were joined by Henry Hurlburt.

"We're doing pretty, boys, after all," said the captain of the scrubs.

"We'll beat 'em," said Tom.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"I hardly dare to hope for such good luck."

"I'll give you a 'pointer.'"

"Go it."

"Rolando is a good batter—a strong batter, but he's got one fault."

"What is it?"

"He's inclined to a fungo. But give him a chance the next time he comes to the bat. He'll raise the ball, and I'll get him again."

"It may not come to you."

"Your other fielders are all right, and it will be an easy ball, you bet."

"I'll try it once."

"No risk."

"I did intend to give him a base if I got away with the other batters."

"Don't do it, as it will be a triumph over you. As it stands, the batting record is about equal. The crowd will get on to it, and will say you were afraid to give him a ball, and Ralph will come out ahead. Let him hit, and take the chances."

"Suppose others are on the bases?"

"All right; let him take his chance."

"I'll try it."

Henry walked away, and Hiram said:

"Tom, you're a daisy!"

"Am I?"

"Yes; you're up to all the 'points.'"

"I don't like the way that fellow acts, and the regulars have the crowd with them. We must lay them out."

"By George! it will make a time if we do."

"Wait and see."

"You were fooling, I see."

"Fooling?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"In the practice."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh! I know."

Tom merely laughed, and at the same moment the scrub nine batter was caught out on a tip.

The next man went out on a fungo foul, and Henry Hurlburt again faced the pitcher. Henry was careful, and watched warily for two balls to go by—one wide, the other over the plate—and then he caught on to a ball and sent it low and straight between second base and shortstop. It was a swift daisy-cutter, and a clean base hit.

A stout one it was—one of the model hits of any game of ball—the first real, clear base hit made thus far in the game.

Ralph was mad. He could not conceal his chagrin, and to the next batter he sent two very wild balls, and on one of them Henry made a safe run to second base.

Ward walked in, and said:

"Ralph, you are losing your head!"

"Hang it! I'd rather be kicked than have him make that hit."

"If you ain't careful you will give the game away; Henry is a great base runner."

"Don't you fear!"

"Be careful, old boy."

Ralph immediately settled down to business, sent good, swift, difficult balls, and the batter struck out, and the score still stood nothing to nothing and an inning in favor of the regulars.

As the nine walked in Ward said to Rolando:

"That's the way to do it, old man. I'm to the bat, and I'll start the streak."

"Yes, do it."

Ward kept his word; he did knock out a safe hit and secured his base; but he died there, for the next three batters went out—one on a fly, the other on an infield hit to Henry Hurlburt, and the last man became dazed, struck wildly three times, and was retired.

The scrub nine did no better, and still the score stood nothing to nothing, and an inning in favor of the regulars.

It was a good game, however; indeed, thus far it had been one of the best games ever played on the grounds.

The scrub boys were rising in the estimation of the on-lookers, and the students generally began to realize that they had two good teams, and the remark was passed around:

"It's a close thing, after all; I thought the regulars would annihilate them."

The regulars again faced Henry's pitching, and the first man went out, the second secured his base on a bad fumble by the shortstop, and he gained second base on a good run. A man on second and only one man out was the score.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

THE regulars became very confident, and the scrubs were correspondingly depressed. Things looked bad, as the boys say.

Hiram called to Tom:

"We're gone, old man!"

"Not yet, my dear."

"They'll make a run, sure."

"One run don't win a game."

"Our boys will become rattled."

"No, no. Just wait; it's all right."

The regulars' next batter sent a ball to center field. Again it appeared like a sure hit. The man on second received orders to run in. It did not seem possible that the ball could be secured, when again Tom made a wonderful catch away down near the fence. A shout arose, and the man who had run in started to return to his base, but Tom made a splendid throw, and the ball went straight into the hands of the man on second base just in time, and the umpire declared batter and runner out.

A second time Tom had saved the game, and a second time he received an ovation as he came in from the field. Thus far he certainly had won the honors of the day.

Ralph and Ward were dazed, and as they came together Ward said:

"Hang that fellow! It's the second time he's knocked us out."

"He is a devil!" muttered Ralph, between his teeth.

"I'm afraid we're gone, Ralph!"

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with you? Wait until I go to the bat again."

"You go in the next inning?"

"Yes."

"Oh, by George! if you only could make a run!"

"I will."

"I hope you will. Hang that fellow! how they applaud him."

The applause was gall and bitterness to both Ralph and Ward.

As Tom came up to the bench, Henry Hurlburt approached him, and shook his hand and patted him on the back; the applause was renewed, and Henry said:

"If we win this game, Rolando is the man responsible for the defeat of his nine."

"How so?"

"For his meanness. If he had let me lay you off, they would have won the game. There is not another man on our nine who could have taken those two balls; and your return of that ball to second base was the prettiest throw I ever saw."

"We may win."

"We will win. Those fellows are getting rattled."

The scrub nine went out, however, in one-two-three order, and the confidence of the regulars returned. It was still nothing to nothing and one inning in their favor.

Ralph stepped to the plate. There was blood in his eyes, as the saying goes, and the assemblage appeared to fully appreciate the fact.

Henry remembered Tom's instructions and sent in one wide ball, and then a good fair ball.

Ralph caught it good and sent it to left field, not high in the air, but just over the infielders' heads. It slipped through the left fielder's

hands on a bound over his head. It looked like a home run, but the center fielder backed up the left fielder and returned the ball, with a second splendid throw in, and Ralph was held at third base.

It would be impossible to describe the excitement that followed. A man on third and nobody out—that was how the game stood. A run was certain, but, alas! the next batter, in his eagerness to hurry in the runner, tipped out. Still there were two batters to face the pitcher.

Ward had walked over behind third base to coach the runner.

"Keep your eye peeled, Ralph," he said. "We've got 'em."

The second man after Ralph struck out, and a groan arose from all over the field. It looked as though Ralph was going to die at third.

The next batter stepped to the plate. He was known to be the poorest and most uncertain batter on the nine. All hope of a run vanished, and Henry Hurlburt felt that it was all right, and just there he made a mistake. He was more watchful against a run in from third than anything else. He thought he had the batter dead to rights. He was a little careless. Eternal vigilance is the price of victory. He sent in an easy ball; the batter made a lunge at it; he caught it fair, and sent the ball over the second baseman's head and ran like a deer to first base as Ralph made a dash for the home plate.

"Safe!" came the decision from the umpire. One run in and a man on first base.

The applause was deafening, and Ward, approaching Ralph, said:

"Now we've got 'em!"

"I knew we'd get 'em. Let's go in now and lay 'em out. We've got 'em rattled."

The man on first base was very proud of his achievement, and he became quite bold. He began to leap and frisk on first base, and set to worry the pitcher; but Henry was no fool. He had lost his cunning for one minute. He was again on his guard and fully alert.

The man on first became quite bold. Twice he ventured well away from his base and twice Henry sent the ball over, but the runner slid under and saved himself; but, alas! the third time he proved too venturesome. The ball went over like a bullet. The first baseman was a good one; the adventurer was short of his base, and the decision came promptly:

"Out on first!"

A groan arose and comments were rife.

"What a fool!" "I'd club him!" and all manner of remarks in condemnation of the base runner followed.

The facts are he was playing good ball. It is good tactics in such an emergency to bother a pitcher; but Ralph was angry. He did not like the little triumph the opposing pitcher had won, and he went over and jawed his player in the most violent manner, and the crowd, who understood what was going on, muttered:

"It serves him right."

#### CHAPTER XXV.

THUS far it had been a splendidly played game: the honors were about evenly divided between the two nines, and Ralph and Tom Weir had both won especial honors in the game.

At the close of the inning described the game stood even innings and one run in favor of the regulars, and it was Tom Weir to the bat.

"Now go for him, Ralph!" said Ward.

"You bet I'll send him back to the bench quicker than any man you ever saw!"

As Tom went to secure his bat Henry approached, and said:

"Sock it, Weir."

"Shall I?"

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"A homer."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"All right; that's what I'll go for."

"You must look out, though."

"Why?"

"Rolando is afraid of you."

"Is he?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I saw Ward talking to him."

"Ah!"

"He will do his level best."

"Will he?"

"Sure!"

"And you want a home run, eh?"

"Get it, and you are the hero of the day."



"And I will make a friend of you?"  
 "You will."  
 "I want a good friend."  
 "Oh, just make a home run, and I'll be your brother!"  
 Hiram also took an opportunity to caution Tom.  
 "Look out, Tom."  
 "Why?"  
 "Rolando will make a clown of you if he can."

"If he can," repeated Tom, in a significant tone.  
 "You lay for him for a good one."  
 "What do you want me to do?"  
 "Sock it to her."  
 "Sock it to her, eh?"  
 "Yes."  
 "For one, two, or three bases? Or how will a home run do?"  
 "Don't try for a home run."  
 "Why not?"  
 "You'll raise her up in the air, and they have good fielders."  
 "What shall I do?"  
 "If you get first, you're a dandy."  
 "All right; we'll see."

Tom Weir was a dandy as a ball player. He had one of the longest heads for "points." He stepped up to the plate, and there was dead silence.

The first ball came wide, and a ball was called on the pitcher. The second ball went over the plate, and Tom stood and let it go by, as though he were afraid of it. He didn't make an attempt even to hit the ball.

A second ball went over the plate, and he stood like an idiot.

The crowd commented and asked:  
 "What's the matter with him? He is scared out of his wits."

Even Ralph laughed. He had a sure thing. He sent in a swift ball over the plate but failed to give the curve. Tom's bat came round, and like a meteor the ball cleft the air and went sailing over the heads of the fielders. The latter all made a rush, but a bird couldn't have overtaken that ball.

Tom meantime ran like a deer, and amid a shout such as can only be heard on a ball-field reached the home plate before the ball was returned even to the second baseman.

It was a magnificent hit—a clean, safe, sure home run—there was no dispute, and Ralph was mad.

Tom had fooled him. His seeming fear was a trick; his standing like a dummy was a "guy." He was a good batter, and for the third time he had won the honors of the day.

The assemblage became frenzied, as a home run is always greeted with enthusiasm, and when it is the tying or winning run its importance is the greater and it receives the heartier recognition.

The scrub boys betrayed their delight. Hiram Perkins turned a handspring, and others sent their bats in the air, and when Tom walked over toward the bench they all crowded around him with congratulations; indeed, the event for a few moments stopped the game. The regulars were paralyzed and dazed.

Ward walked in and asked:  
 "What was the matter with you, old man?"  
 "Curse him!"  
 "What did he do?"  
 "I'll tell you."  
 "Yes, do."  
 "He fooled me."  
 "He did?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How?"

"I thought he was afraid of the ball and I put in a skimmer, but he was laying for it."

"And he got you good."

"Yes, he did, but the game is not over yet."

"Our boys are rattled, though. I tell you they came on the field with too much confidence, and this thing is playing them out."

"Wait until I go to the bat again; I've learned a point from that fellow."

A moment later and the game was resumed. Meantime Hiram had said to our hero:

"By ginger, Tom, that was a dandy!"

Henry Hurlburt came up, and said:  
 "You're my brother from this time out, Weir."

"I got him good," said Tom.

"Yes, you did."

"We'll win the game."

"We may."

"They're rattled now," said Tom.

"We will win if we can," was the response.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER the usual wait following a decided crisis in a game, the second batsman of the scrubs went to the plate.

Ralph Rolando was mad, and, gathering himself for an effort, he sent three vicious balls directly over the home plate, and the striker three times cut the air and was out.

Rolando's fine pitching won for him well-merited applause, and the third batter faced him again. Ralph settled down for a grand display of pitching, but the batter caught with a grounder. But the ball did not go beyond the infielders, and two men were out. The fourth batter stepped to the plate, and the crowd cheered the pitcher. He had indeed done well, and had in part redeemed the one fatal ball that had yielded a home run, and when the fourth batter retired on a foul tip there arose an outburst of approval.

Again the game was even, as far as the score was concerned, with an inning to the credit of the regulars.

Thus far it had been a magnificent game of ball indeed. The excitement of the scene had spread, for many came to witness the game who thought to find it would be a one-sided affair.

Nearly all the under-teachers were on the grounds, and, as far as it had gone, it was the most exciting contest that had ever been fought there. Even the two clergymen of the village had heard of the great game, and had hastened to the field.

Meantime the game proceeded. Ralph had gone to each one of his men, had given them instructions, and had sought to encourage them to the best of his ability. He was proving himself an excellent captain and well fitted for the place.

Nelson Ward, who was quite a ladies' man, as the saying goes, walked over to where Myra stood in the midst of a group of girls, and the merry beauties greeted him with the discouraging announcement:

"You are going to be beaten."  
 "Not by a long shot!"  
 "I told you so," said Myra.  
 This "I told you" is always an irritating taunt.

"Wait and see," said Nelson.

"You fellows thought you were going to walk right over your opponents."

"So we will. Just wait until Rolando comes to the bat again!"

"Yes, and wait until the Duke of New York comes to the bat again!" returned Myra.

"That fellow has been lucky. It will run so sometimes."

"Then you do not give him credit for good playing?" said one of the other girls.

"Oh, he has played well, but he is lucky."

"If you lose the game you will owe your defeat to the Duke."

"No, we will owe it to luck. But, girls, we will not lose the game. See that! our boys are going in now."

As Ward spoke, the first batter for the regulars sent a good safe hit over second base, and the next batter took a crack at the first ball offered, and advanced the runner a base on an excellent sacrifice hit.

"Our boys are down to business now," said Ward, in a triumphant tone. "That is only the beginning; we'll make a show of them this inning—see if we don't."

The third batter for the regulars, however, went out on strikes; and it was two men out, and one man on second.

"Ward to the bat!" came the call.

"Now, watch me!" said Ward, as he walked away to take his position at the plate.

The young fellow was in dead earnest, and he made a desperate dash at the first ball. He made a tip, but it was not held, and the remark passed around:

"What luck! If he had got that ball square it would have been the hit of the day."

The second ball was wide; the third went over the plate and caught Ward napping. There was a hush of excitement. A base hit meant one run, and probably the winning run of the game. The batter had but one chance, however, Henry Hurlburt was very deliberate; it was a crisis in the game, and at such moments he was cool and steady. Another ball was sent wide, and another, until it stood with but one ball and one strike to the credit of the batter and pitcher. Again Henry delayed, and Ralph called to the man on the base:

"Two men out. Run in on anything."  
 The last ball for the inning, as it proved, was

delivered. Ward made a terrible drive at the sphere, but, alas! the Fates were against him. He made a second tip and the ball landed in the grasp of the catcher. It was a wonderful catch, and the inning was over.

Again the remark went around:  
 "What awful luck!"

Our readers will remember that Tom Weir had remarked after the first inning that the scrubs had the best catcher. The latter, like our hero, was a new-comer to the school, and it was the first time he had played on the grounds in a regular match and he had done well so far.

The game stood even innings and one run each, and so the game went on until Ralph again went to the bat. He had learned a point from Tom and he made use of his knowledge. He caught Henry for a stinger and cleared the bases by a home run, thus maintaining his standing as against Weir.

Never had such a game been played on the grounds. It appeared like a contest of giants.

"That wins the game!" was the comment, and it did appear as though such would be the result.

Ward was again with the girls, and he exclaimed as Ralph crossed the plate:

"What did I tell you? Rolando is the boy! Now we've got 'em, since they will not make another run in the game. If it had not been for that lucky hit of the fellow from New York we would have 'Chicagoed' them."

"Wait until the Duke of New York comes to the bat again," said Myra.

"He'll go out on strikes. Rolando will fix him. You wait and see."

Rolando's was the only run made that inning, and in the next inning for the scrubs Tom came to the plate.

There was great excitement and anticipation. Tom was perfectly cool. One ball went wide, the second over the plate, and a strike was called, the third ball our hero struck at and missed, and two strikes were called on the batter. The next ball was wide and also the succeeding one, and the expectancy was great. Ralph was cool and steady, and slow and sure he sent the deciding ball over the plate.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

ROLANDO took the lead in the honors of the game. Tom cut the air and retired on strikes, and a wild shout greeted Rolando's victory. The remaining two batters were disposed of as they came to the plate, and the regulars had a decided lead. The game stood two to one in runs and an inning to the credit of the regulars, and the comments went around:

"I knew it." "I told you so." "The boys are too much for any team that can be knocked together." "It will be a bad lay out after all." "Wait until Rolando gets another crack at that ball!"

Ward walked in from the field with a swagger. He stepped over to the group of girls, and asked:

"What do you think of it now?"  
 "The game is not over yet."  
 Myra was repeating Ward's own words.  
 "You appear to want to see us beaten!"  
 "I will see you beaten."  
 "And you will be glad?"  
 "Yes, I will."  
 "Why?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, please."

"I don't like the way your nine underrates the other players."

"We have a right to underrate them. We can walk away with them."

It did look as though Ward spoke truly, for two single base hits were made, and there was a man each on first and second base, and it began to appear as though Henry had lost his head.

"It's in the last inning when nerve tells," said Ward, "and Rolando has too good a nerve for Hurlburt."

"I don't believe you will win the game."

"We've won it already."

"Wait till the Duke comes to the bat again."

"Yes, and he'll be retired, as he was before. He'll never get another hit off Ralph."

"Wait and see. Aha! what's this? Bully for our side!"

Another base hit had been made, and three men were on bases.

"We'll annihilate them!" cried Ward.

It did look as though the scrubs had gone to pieces, and again the comments passed:  
 "I knew it." "The regulars were only fool-



ing with them." "You'll see fun now."

"Look out for leather-hunting!"

The fourth man came to the bat. He struck out, and three men were on bases. He was the first man out, and only a little hit over the infielders would have sent in at least two men, as the runner on second base was stealing way up almost on to third base, taking advantage of the fact that the infielders were playing way in toward home base, forming a little half circle around the pitcher, in order to prevent a run-in from third base.

The fifth man came to the bat, and he too struck out, and there arose a groan all over the field.

One who has not witnessed such a crisis on a ball-field can hardly appreciate the excitement of the affair at such a moment. A breathless silence prevailed as the sixth batter went to the bat. As the first ball went over the plate a strike was called; the second ball went wide; the third ball was a hit, and a shout arose. It was a good hit, right out over second base, but lo! what is this; a white-robed lithe figure was running in from center field; the ball was descending like a shot, but alas! it never struck the ground. Tom Weir was under it and the side was out. It was a wonderful run in, and a most marvelous catch, a result that no one had anticipated. The crowd were stunned. It was so unexpected the runners could not realize that the side was out, and stood and gazed in amazement as the scrub players started to walk in from the field.

Ward was standing near the girls when Tom made the catch, and in the excitement of the moment a curse fell from his lips.

A cheer greeted our hero. He had earned the applause and they could not deny it to him.

The game proceeded without change until the scrubs came to the bat for the ninth inning and, as it was supposed, the last inning, and it stood two to one and Tom Weir at the bat.

"This ends the game," was the comment.

"When Weir gets out the game is won."

"He may make another homer," came the remark.

"No man makes two home runs in one game," was the answer.

Myra Hubbard, in her excitement, walked out from the group of girls and threw Tom a flower. The act was greeted with laughter and applause, and Myra rose in the estimation of the on-lookers, as it was supposed her sympathies were with the regulars and her act was merely prompted by kindness and a spirit of fairness.

Tom walked from the plate and picked up the rose, and fastened it in his belt, and again the crowd shouted.

Never had a word passed between Ralph and Tom during the game, and the two lads eyed each other sharply.

Rolando was mad, and he sent a vicious ball over the plate, and Tom let it go by.

"The flower has knocked him out and given the game to the regulars," cried a villager, who was in sympathy with the scrubs. "Yes, it was a trick," he added, with gleaming eyes of anger.

The second ball went wide, but the third came fair, and Tom cut the air for a strike in favor of the pitcher.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

THERE rose a murmur and a shout. Weir was the last hope of the friends of the scrubs, and if he failed the game was set down as virtually lost.

There followed a dead silence, and the pitcher sent in another wide ball, and again another, until it stood three balls against the pitcher and two strikes against the batter. One chance more for each.

Rolando well understood the situation, and he was very wroth. Should he give the batter a base he would be denounced as a coward. It would be called a stolen game. Should he give him a fair ball there was a chance for a base hit at least.

He determined to take the chances and send in a fair ball, but he determined it should be what the boys call a dandy. The ball was delivered, Tom caught on, and away it went sailing out to the field. There followed a moment of suspense. The batter had started running like a deer to make the circuit of the bases. The fielder could not gauge the ball; it went over his head, and a great shout arose as Tom came panting over the plate for a home run, and, what was more important, the tying run.

Yes, the game was even, and he had made two "homers" in the game, a possible but rare feat.

The scrubs were jubilant, and the regulars were correspondingly cast down, and Ward and Rolando were particularly angry, as the run had been made by the lad they so bitterly hated.

The next three men of the scrubs went out in one-two-three order, and the game stood two to two with an inning to the credit of the regulars.

Three batters took their positions and were retired, and the game was indeed a tie, and the cry went up a draw game. But no, neither captain would have it, as there was plenty of time to play two or three more innings if necessary, and it was decided to have the game proceed.

The scrubs went again to the bat. It was Henry Hurlburt's strike. He had gained great confidence and he sent a two-bagger, and made his bases by running very cleverly.

The excitement became intense and the friends of the scrubs exclaimed:

"If it was only the Duke at the bat the scrubs would have them."

We will here say that the appellation applied to Tom had been started on the field, and his fine play had fixed the pseudonym.

The unexpected frequently happens on the ball-field. The next man to the bat for the scrubs made a base hit, and Henry was moved forward a base. The next ball was missed by the catcher—the excitement was too much for him—and Hurlburt ran in and gained his run, and the game stood three to two in favor of the scrubs and one inning still to the credit of the regulars, and Rolando was the second man to the bat. An accident had occurred in running in to Henry Hurlburt. He had slid to the plate and had injured his arm. His pitching arm was weakened. He turned to Tom and said:

"We'll lose the game after all."

"Why?"

"My arm is badly hurt; I can not pitch," and tears came to the brave fellow's eyes.

There followed a moment's silence, and Tom said:

"You go to center field."

"Eh?"

"You go to center field."

"And what will you do?"

"I will go to the pitcher's box."

"Can you pitch?"

"I have pitched, and I can do better than a man with an injured arm."

"I can trust you anywhere after what you have done to-day. I will pitch for the first batter, and if I find I can not hold them down I will let you come to the box."

"All right."

The inning ended without any more runs for the scrubs. But they were one run ahead, and if they could retire the regulars in the next inning the game was won.

Henry went to the box. He pitched two wide balls. The batter fell to the fact of his weakness and caught the next ball and knocked out a two-bagger, and it was Rolando at the bat.

A shout arose and the word was passed:

"The regulars will beat 'em yet," and it did seem as though the prediction would be verified; but lo! what does this mean? Henry walked out of the pitcher's box and motions to the center fielder, and Tom Weir starts to walk in.

At once there was a great excitement, and the word was passed:

"The Duke is to pitch!"

The two players met and exchanged a few words.

"Can you do him, Tom?"

"Leave it to me."

"Don't lose your head. He's a dandy hitter, and very tricky."

"I'll keep my eye on him."

There was a hush as Tom took his position and prepared to send in his first ball, and away it went, and it was wide; but the experts present at once exclaimed:

"He's a pitcher!"

The second ball went wide, but the third went over the plate and was permitted to pass. The fourth went over the plate and Rolando cut the air. The fifth went over the plate and again Rolando cut the air and was declared out. Yes, out on strikes; the Duke had actually struck out the best batter of the regulars the first clip, and it was well understood by those who had watched many games that the effect would be very demoralizing on the succeeding batters, and such proved to be the fact, as the next two batters fell easy victims to the pitcher. The

last man was declared out and a runner was left on second base. The game was lost, the selected nine—the scrubs—after a magnificently played game, had beaten the regulars, and with the closing of the game there was a grand rush upon the field, and Tom Weir, the hero of the day was surrounded and greeted with cheers and congratulations.

Rolando and Ward were sullen and black with anger as their friends crowded around them.

"It was dumb luck!" was the remark most-ly offered.

"You can play them again and annihilate them."

It was indeed a cold day for Rolando. He had lost on every side, and the boy who had triumphed over him was the one, of all others, he most hated.

The field was cleared. The lads had put off their ball clothes, and, followed by their friends, each nine retired from the grounds.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

THAT night, as might be expected, the talk of the town was the game, and our hero's name was discussed *pro* and *con*, but he had leaped into sudden fame, and many inquiries were made as to who he was, where he came from, and why he was called the Duke of New York.

That same evening Ward and Rolando met, and they were two gloomy and discontented fellows.

"By George! Ralph, but it was a bad dose we got to-day, and that fellow—that darn boot-black—is at the bottom of our mortification. I'll bet he is a professional ball player."

"He's a devil, that fellow!" said Ralph.

"Do you know, I believe Myra Hubbard was really glad we lost the game?"

"I know she is glad."

"Did she tell you so?"

"Yes, she did, and we had a regular talk."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"What passed?"

"I was a fool."

"But tell me what passed."

"After the game I met her on the way home, and I started to walk with her, and I said:

"We lost the game through the dumb luck of that bootblack."

"Did you say that?"

"Yes."

"I am glad of it; it was just the right thing."

"I got the worst of it, though."

"How?"

"Oh, she is a pert thing, and she said: 'That young gentleman may have once been a boot-black, but his qualities entitle him to be called a duke. He's a splendid fellow, and the best ball player I ever saw on the field!'"

"Ralph, I don't know, after all, as it was just the right thing that you said."

"I know it wasn't."

"I see now how it is."

"Well, what do you see, sharp fellow?"

"Your Myra's father was a poor mill-boy once."

"So I've heard."

"And her father is proud of it, they say, and he has taught his girl all the ridiculous ideas about merit as against birth."

"That's it."

"We'd better drop the bootblack business for the present. Don't you see she takes those innuendoes as a reflection upon her own father? And I believe now that the real truth is her sympathy with that fellow all comes from the fact that he was once a bootblack."

"He is a smart fellow, Ward."

"Yes, he is. No use talking, he's a player!"

"He's a pitcher, too. I could see that by the ball he sent me."

"He is!"

"Henry Hurlburt is nowhere against him. If Henry had not hurt his arm, I'd have knocked out a home run and brought in two runs, and one would have won the game."

"I was in hopes you would do it."

"I might 'sock' him after I got on to his pitching, but coming in at the last moment he was too much for me."

"He will be popular with the boys soon, you'll see."

"Yes, but I will never like him."

"Nor I either," declared Ward.

"I have been thinking, Ward."

"Well?"

"You hate that fellow?"



"Yes, I do."  
 "What did he ever do to you to cause you to hate him?"  
 "I hated him at sight. I've no great love for these common fellows, anyhow."  
 "And you really dislike him?"  
 "Yes, I do."  
 "And he will become very popular?"  
 "Yes, he will. The boys are talking about him now, and some of his friends are whooping him up."  
 "I know it."  
 "You heard 'em?"  
 "Yes, I did."  
 "I suppose we will have to submit and have that fellow domineer over us?"  
 "No, we won't."  
 "How will we help it? I am afraid the boot-black business won't work."  
 "Why not?"  
 "Well, the fact is there are too many fellows here who are low-bred themselves, when you come right down to it."  
 "I told you I had been thinking?"  
 "Yes."  
 "That same idea struck me."  
 "Yes?"  
 "I have good reason to dislike that fellow."  
 "Yes, you have."  
 "You have observed, then?"  
 "Yes, I have."  
 "He started right in to lord it over me."  
 "Yes, he did."  
 "You noticed that?"  
 "Yes."  
 "He is a jealous fellow."  
 "You can see that."  
 "He saw I was popular."  
 "Yes."  
 "And he set to down me from the start."  
 "He did."  
 "I felt right away that he was my enemy."  
 "Yes."  
 "He commenced to make war on me in a quiet way."  
 "Yes."  
 "He insulted me that first night."  
 "Yes."  
 "What he did was intentional."  
 "I saw that right away."  
 "He's got the best of me so far."  
 "He has, that's sure."  
 "Now, what shall we do?"  
 "What do you propose to do?"  
 "How about my leaving the school?"  
 "You leave the school?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Never! Will you let that fellow drive you off?"

There came a look upon Rolando's face that was terrible to behold in a young fellow who was still at his books.  
 "I was thinking," said Ralph.  
 "What were you thinking?"  
 "I must go away or down him, or he will down me."  
 "You are a smart fellow, Ralph."  
 "Am I?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Well?"  
 "We can put up some trick on that low fellow."  
 "Can we?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How?"  
 "Some way."  
 "What can we do?"  
 "Let's make up our minds to put our heads together and think out something."  
 "He is against us?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Well, then, we are right to start in against him, and we'll down him yet."

### CHAPTER XXX.

"HAVE you got a plan?" asked Ward.  
 "Yes, I have."  
 "Tell me what it is."  
 "Can I rely upon you?"  
 "Yes."  
 "If you ever get mad at me and betray me I'll kill you!"  
 There was a meaning glitter in Rolando's eyes as he spoke.  
 "You can always depend upon me."  
 "We will have to make friends with that fellow."  
 "I can never make friends with him."  
 "I mean we must pretend to make friends with him."  
 "But he may not let us do so."

"Yes, if we manage it right—to speak plain, we must make friends with him so we can betray him."

"He should be betrayed, for he has betrayed us, or rather he would if he had a chance."

"Of course he would; but we will get ahead of him."

"He may not be willing to make friends."

"Oh, yes, if we manage it right."

"How can we manage it?"

"We must go very slowly to work—we must not rush in on him, but gradually win his confidence, and then watch our opportunity. We can send that fellow to jail some day if we work it right."

Ward turned pale, and said:

"Will you go as far as that?"

"We will bring him into disgrace. Now you and I must understand each other—there must be no trying to conceal our real purpose from each other, and we must stop at nothing—that's just how the matter stands."

Two lads better fitted for a gross conspiracy could not be found. Neither one of them possessed one real principle; indeed, it was a notorious fact that Ward's father was an unbeliever and a scoffer; and Rolando's parents were mere people of the world, given only to show and fashion. The training of either boy had not been what it should have been, and it was well known they avoided attendance at college prayers upon the slightest pretense. They were bad boys at heart, and it was their mutual badness that really formed the bond between them.

There was one difference between the lads. Rolando was physically a brave fellow and Ward was what is called a big coward. He was a bulldozer over little fellows, but when it came to the real encounter he had no sand in him at all. As stated, on the other hand, Rolando was a really plucky fellow. He could stand a good beating and he would face any risk. He had done so on one occasion. He had laid out a rough fellow who had imposed upon one of the students, and it had been a desperate battle, won by Rolando through sheer pluck, endurance, and pertinacity. He had been terribly beaten before he had succeeded in breaking up his antagonist.

And upon another occasion when two little village boys broke through the ice, and were in danger of drowning, Rolando, at the risk of his life, had saved them, and these incidents had made him very popular among the students. He was also, in his way, generous in money affairs. Of course he had plenty of money and he spent it freely.

In one direction Ralph had not succeeded as well as he desired. Although he had received more attentions from Mr. Hubbard and his daughter than any other student, he still had an inner consciousness that Myra did not think as much of him as he would have desired to believe that she did, and when she, from the start, showed such a preference for Tom Weir all the venom in his nature was aroused.

He had been invited to meals at the Hubbard mansion, a distinction that had been conferred on but few students; but it was a fact that Mr. Hubbard knew the elder Rolando, and had been entertained by him, and the courtesies to the son were but a return for courtesies received.

Ralph and Ward held a long consultation, and the former said:

"You must make up to him first, Ward. You must go slowly, as I said, or he will suspect our purpose."

"I can work through Perkins."

"No; he will be against us. He is down on us."

"But we can bring him around."

"Not now; he is mortally offended. He believes we played him for a fool. Yes, he will be dead against us, and we must bring about a break between Weir and Perkins."

"That will be hard to do, I am afraid."

"You must get a chance to speak very highly of Weir's game of ball. Talk out loud, and what you say will be carried to him; and you can run in that I admire his game and attribute our defeat to his splendid play, and all that."

"It will be a hard dose to praise him, for his game after all was nothing but dumb luck."

"You're mistaken. He is one of the best players I ever saw, and I am afraid he is up in all other athletic games."

"Have you seen him down at the gymnasium?"

"No; he has not been there since the night he knocked me out."

"Did he knock you out?"

"It looked as though he did."

"And you want to make friends with him?"

"Yes."

"And what will you do then?"

"We will watch for a chance. But I want him to be on good terms with me and visit my rooms, and I want it to be thought we are the best of friends."

"I tell you now I think it will be hard to bring it about."

"We can do it if we manage it right."

"I will set to work at once, as I know some of the boys are down at the barn."

"All right; go down there."

"Will you come?"

"No, not to-night; but we will down that fellow yet!"

### CHAPTER XXXI.

A FEW days passed, and during those days Nelson Ward on many occasions spoke very highly of Tom Weir, and took particular pains to let the boys know how much Ralph Rolando admired the new scholar. Especially did Ward speak his eulogiums in the presence of Hiram Perkins. And one day Hiram said to our hero:

"You have conquered Rolando."

"Have I?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"He wants to be friends with you."

"Does he?"

"Yes."

"Does he really want to be friends with me?"

"Yes."

"What makes you think so?"

"He and Ward are very outspoken in your favor."

Tom was silent and thoughtful a moment, and then he said:

"Hiram, do you really like me?"

"Yes, I do."

"And will you be true to me?"

"Yes, I will. Why do you ask?"

"I have a bitter enemy in this school."

"You did have, but I think you are the winner ever since that ball match. Ward has been blowing you up to the skies as one of the best lads on the face of the earth."

"I know he has been speaking well of me, but did you ever hear how the snake charms the bird he is preparing to strike?"

Perkins's eyes opened.

"Rolando does not like me; he never will like me. And now I will tell you something; he is a very dangerous foe."

"You need not fear him."

"No, not in open combat; but he is a secret enemy."

"Then why do they pretend such great friendship?"

"Those two fellows, Ward and Rolando, have deliberately conspired to ruin me. That fellow will follow me through life."

"Why should he?"

"He has conceived a bitter hatred for me."

"I think you are mistaken."

"Oh, no, I am not. I will tell you something. I have had a great deal of experience, although I am not yet eighteen years of age; but since I first learned to talk I have been thrown more or less upon my own resources. When a baby in the foundling asylum, I did not receive that attention which children receive in their own homes, and it was good luck and a naturally strong and vigorous constitution that pulled me through; and then for three years, you will remember, I knocked around the great city of New York, dependent entirely upon myself. I have slept in coal-boxes on stormy nights and under the dock in the summer-time, with rats as companions during the long hours of the night. The result has been that I have learned to observe and study human nature, and I have become a keen reader. I know Rolando and Ward like a book. I know their designs; they intend to ruin me if they can."

"Ruin you?"

"Yes."

"But how can they do so?"

"I can not tell, but they may mark me for life. That fellow Rolando is capable of carrying out any evil design against a person he hates, and he hates me."

"But it is possible he may make friends with you and learn to like you."

"Never!"

"And what will you do?"

"Avoid him."

"And that will excite his hatred the more."

"Yes; but it is the safer policy for me. I will have nothing to do with him; it shall be as



open warfare between us or a truce. I will never let him become my friend."

"If I were you I'd leave the school."

"Leave the school?"

"Yes."

"Be driven away by such a fellow?"

"I would not remain where there was a person hating me as you say Rolando hates you."

"I will never turn my back on him. No; I will remain in this school."

"Then there will be constant rivalry between you and Rolando."

"Yes; and I will beat him every time."

A few days following the conversation recorded as having occurred between Hiram and our hero, Ralph Rolando gave a little entertainment in his rooms, and he sent a note inviting Hiram and Tom Weir. The latter immediately wrote a note acknowledging the compliment, but declining the invitation on the ground of close application to study.

The entertainment took place, but Tom Weir was not present, neither did Hiram attend.

It had been an exceptionally dry day when the game of ball had been played, and although the regulars had challenged the scrubs to a second match, the weather was too unfavorable for the playing of the game, and during the entertainment there was much discussion among the boys as to the outcome when the regular ball season should open.

Ward and Ronaldo had little to say. They had arranged the entertainment for the express purpose of securing Tom Weir's presence, and as he did not attend they were greatly disappointed.

After the other boys had departed, the schemers had a talk.

"I was afraid that fellow would not come," said Ward.

"And so was I. Hang him! I only wish I could get him here just once or twice and I would fix him!"

"Would you quarrel with him?"

"No."

About a week later following all the incidents we have described, there came a week's holiday. The seminary was closed and the majority of the students went to their homes. Hiram Perkins remained in the village, and so did Rolando and Ward, and as Tom Weir had no home, he, as a matter of course, remained at the school, and there was great joy among those that remained when it was announced that an entertainment was to occur at the residence of one of the townspeople, and quite a number of the older students were invited to attend. As it was a regular recess the authorities of the seminary had no actual control over the doings of the students no more than if the lads were in their own homes.

Tom Weir and Hiram received invitations, as did also Ward and Rolando, and it soon became known to the students who were invited that a number of the prettiest girls in town and from the surrounding towns had been invited to be present, and among others the beautiful Myra was to attend, and it also became known that there would be dancing. Indeed, it was rumored that there would actually be a german.

Ward and Rolando were talking the matter over, and the former exclaimed:

"You will have the Duke this time!"

"How?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"An ex-bootblack won't know how to dance, and there is where the true gentleman will come in."

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

THE night of the entertainment arrived, and at the proper hour there were gathered a gay company of young and happy people, and the most beautiful among all the girls was Myra Hubbard. She was simply dressed, and that is an advantage a really beautiful girl possesses. She can shine, as a rule, even more resplendently in simple attire; her charms appear to greater advantage—and Myra did look radiantly beautiful.

Rolando looked upon her with burning eyes. He was madly in love. His passion fairly raged within his bosom, and he almost choked when the hostess led Tom Weir forward and introduced him to the queen of beauty.

A few moments' conversation passed between Myra and Tom. The former made an allusion to the ball game, and Tom said:

"After you kindly encouraged me with that

flower I could not do aught else but make a home run."

"And you did it well."

"I am surprised," said Tom, "that your sympathies were with the scrub nine."

"Why?"

"It would be but natural that you should desire the regular team to hold their supremacy."

"My sympathies were with them until I beheld how confident they were and how they appeared to despise their opponents; and then again, I heard of the other captain's meanness."

"Meanness?"

"Yes."

"To what do you allude?"

"Henry Hurlburt was afraid you could not fill the position well, and he asked to put in another man. The captain of the regulars refused his request."

"I don't know as you can call that unfair according to base-ball rules. Henry had named his nine, and under the rules Ralph was right."

"Would you have decided the same way under the circumstances?"

"Ah! there comes in the question of temperament. I am speaking of the exact rules under the conditions."

"Had Rolando acceded to Henry's request he would have won the game."

"You seem determined to give me a great deal of credit."

"Every one admits you won the game for the selected nine."

"They are very kind."

At this moment the hostess came forward and said:

"I am making up partners for a german. Will you dance with Mr. Weir, Myra?"

"I shall be proud to dance with Mr. Weir," came the prompt answer.

"And will you and Mr. Weir lead?"

The sudden honor almost took Tom's breath away, and we will here reveal a secret. Tom Weir had always been ambitious. He had always felt an inner consciousness that some day he would be quite a man; and when he was at the academy up in the country he had traveled eight miles two nights in the week to attend a dancing-school, and his natural grace of movement served him well, and he had become what the girls call a beautiful dancer. At the hotel he had danced the german several times, and upon one occasion had been selected to lead it, so he was fully capable of maintaining his position with Myra.

The latter, knowing he was from New York, concluded that as a matter of course he was a dancer, and she had not for one moment believed the statement concerning our hero that had been told by Rolando. The young man was too well bred and accomplished and too handsome and graceful in all his movements ever to have been a bootblack, and the lovely girl had come to look upon the innuendo as a mean slander.

It was arranged that Tom and Myra were to lead the dance.

The hostess a few moments later told Rolando to choose a partner for the german, and Ralph watched an opportunity to approach Myra, and he asked her to dance with him. The girl immediately said:

"I am sorry, but I have a partner."

"You have a partner?"

"Yes."

"With whom will you dance?"

"Mr. Weir."

Ralph started, and exclaimed:

"Why, Miss Hubbard!"

"Well, sir?" said Myra, in a sharp tone.

"I am surprised!"

"Surprised, sir?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Why, pray?"

"To think that you will dance with that fellow!"

"Mr. Rolando, your words are not very complimentary to me!"

"But you do not know!"

"Know what?"

"Do you remember what I told you?"

"I think you were misinformed."

"What I told you is the truth. The fellow does not deny it."

"He is a gentleman!"

"You can not afford to dance with him."

"I can not refuse, now that I have agreed to do so."

"You can make an excuse."

"I do not choose to do so."

"I have one thing to tell you. Some day it

will be known about him and then you will be sorry."

There came a determined look to Myra's face, and she answered:

"When I am sorry I will not come to you for sympathy."

There came a terrible look in Rolando's eyes as he said:

"You may come to me for sympathy whether you want it or not; and I tell you now I am ashamed of your infatuation."

Myra's eyes flashed fire as she said:

"Be careful what you say, Mr. Rolando."

Ralph was mad with jealousy, and said:

"You will regret dancing with that fellow, mark my words."

"You are insulting."

"I am only solicitous of your reputation."

"Hold!" came the declaration from Myra, as she turned and walked away her face scarlet with anger.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

FURIOUS was the anger that glowed in Ralph Rolando's heart. He knew that he had been too impetuous; he knew he had not been wily enough; but he was wildly, madly in love. It was a youth's fierce passion, and he lacked a man's discretion, even though it can be said that this same passion has made fools of men and heroes.

Rolando decided not to dance. He made an excuse; he said his head ached. Ward found him standing in a corner looking black as any thunder-cloud.

"What is the matter, Ralph?"

"Have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"That fellow will lead the german with Myra Hubbard."

"Weir?"

"Yes."

"Great guns! what is the girl thinking of? Is she mad?"

"Yes. You really desire to know?"

"Why didn't you ask her?"

"I did."

"And she refused to dance with you?"

"She was already engaged to dance with that fellow."

"Hang it! I've a great mind to circulate the truth about him, and all hands will refuse."

"Yes, do it!" said Rolando.

Ward thought a moment, and then said:

"You do it."

"No, I can not do it."

Ward did not dare do it. He was not brave enough. He knew that if it was done under the circumstances he would be compelled to shoulder all the responsibility.

The dance at length commenced, and when Myra and Tom Weir went gliding about the large old-fashioned parlor in the waltz they excited plaudits of admiration. They were a handsome couple and good dancers.

Ward again sought Rolando, and said:

"Did you ever see anything like it—that fellow is a beautiful dancer!"

"Hang him! he is a devil!" retorted Rolando.

"Ralph," said Ward, "I begin to think we've been fooled!"

"Fooled?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Well, I've a suspicion."

"Out with it."

"I don't believe that fellow ever was a boot-black. I believe he told Hiram to tell us that lie. He is a wonderful fellow, and one of the most accomplished fellows I ever met. He is a millionaire, I'll bet a cookey, and he has given out that story to get us in a hole. We'd better be careful, I think. He wants us to tell it on him so that he can come out and disprove it, and then show what a great fellow he really is. We had better be careful!"

The truth was, the same suspicion had passed through the mind of Ralph Rolando. It did not seem possible that an ex-bootblack could be such an accomplished fellow.

"We had better keep quiet," said Ward.

"We will wait and see," was the answer.

The german proceeded and was a grand success. Tom Weir proved himself a splendid leader, and at length there came the usual recess, and the partners set off for the usual promenade.

It was a very large mansion where the entertainment had been given, and all the rooms were thrown open, and as the weather was sin-



Tom was a brave fellow, and as soon as he recovered from the bewilderment he commenced a careful search in order to discover some clew as to the identity of his assailant; but owing to the darkness he could discover nothing, and after some time he muttered:

"Why should I look? I know who struck that treacherous blow, and the party really meant it to be a fatal blow."

Our hero proceeded, and in due time reached his room. He was pretty well wet through, and there was quite a lump on the side of his head, and he knew that had the blow been about an inch higher it would have caught him across the temple, and would have killed him.

Tom stepped to Hiram Perkins's room after he had changed his clothes, and as Hiram had not returned from the festival, Tom re-entered his own room and went to bed.

Upon the following morning Tom did not rise, and he waited for Hiram to come into his room. Hiram did come, but not until study hour, and then he inquired:

"Halloo, Tom! are you in bed yet?"

"Yes; I do not feel well, and I want you to go to Mr. Hamilton and make an excuse for me."

"Are you really sick?"

"Oh, I am not really very bad, but I will not attend the school sessions to-day."

While talking to Hiram, Tom had kept his head buried in the pillows, so that Hiram could not see the lump on his head; but in the afternoon, after the school hours had closed, Hiram again entered his room, and asked:

"How do you feel, Tom?"

"Hiram!" said our hero, who had thought the whole matter well over, "I want to tell you something, but you must keep my secret."

"Certainly I will."

"I met with an accident last night."

"You did?"

"Yes; see here!"

Tom showed the lump on his head.

"Who struck you?"

"Oh, I had a fall."

"That don't look like a lump that came from a fall."

"No, but I will explain. You see, I escorted Miss Hubbard home."

"Yes, I know you did. Last night was a fresh triumph for you."

"After I left her at her home I started across the lots, and when I came to the little bridge across the creek in the woods I must have made a false step and fell, and as I fell I must have struck a sharp stone; at any rate, I found myself in the water, and this morning I found this lump on my head; but you must not say anything about it."

"That's all right; but you are telling me the real facts?"

"Don't you know I always tell the truth; and why shouldn't I tell you the real facts?"

"There is no reason why you should not, but it does look as though you had received a thump on the head with a club."

"You had a pleasant time at the german last night?"

"Yes; although I was only a looker-on. You know I can't dance fancy dances; but you took the cake, old man, and Ralph Rolando was mad, I tell you."

"Yes; I reckon he was mad, and that is why he left early."

"He didn't leave early."

"He didn't?"

"No."

"I thought he did."

"Why, no; I left before he did."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"I thought I saw him go away."

"No."

"He may have gone away and then returned."

"No; he did not leave the house during the whole evening."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"You didn't miss him at all?"

"No."

"Was he there when I left with Miss Hubbard?"

"Yes, he was."

"And Ward also?"

"Yes; both of them were there. Now tell me why you ask."

"Oh! I have no particular reason for asking, but I thought he was so mad he went away."

"No; he remained there all the evening, and during the last hour joined in the Virginia reel."

Two days passed, and during those two days

Tom kept up a continual thinking. We will here state that he looked upon Ralph as his assailant; but if Ronaldo had remained at the dance, he certainly could not have been in the woods at the time Tom was knocked off the bridge.

Mr. Hamilton visited Tom and bid him remain in bed a day or two, if necessary; and Tom did keep his room for two days, and at the end of that time the lump on his head had become considerably reduced.

Our hero had held several conversations with Hiram, and the result was, at length, that he reached the conclusion that his friend assumed considerable as concerned the continued presence of Rolando at the dance.

On the third day, when Tom came out, he met his foe in the hall of the building. The two did not speak, but Tom eyed his foe sharply. The latter, however, gave no sign, and Tom was compelled to mutter:

"It is possible I wrong that fellow. But hang me if I do not get at the truth of this affair! If he didn't assail me, who did? That's the question!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

Tom was a very cute and thoughtful youth, and he had enjoyed a great deal of experience while knocking around New York picking up a living as a bootblack. Indeed, upon one occasion he had been of great service to a detective, and the latter had formed quite a friendship for the boy, and had told him many stories, and had also taught him many tricks as practiced by these astute and daring men.

There had been a time when it was the height of our hero's ambition to some day act as detective, but later incidents in his career had caused him to form a higher ambition.

He had thought a great deal over the assault that had been committed upon him, but kept his own counsel.

There was something mysterious about the whole affair. He had visited the little bridge several times. He had looked for foot-prints and indices that might serve to unravel the mystery, but he failed to make any progress until at length he determined to attempt a regular detective campaign.

The lad went over to the house where the dance had been held. He studied all the entrances and exits, and was still looking around when he met one of the town boys.

Our hero had read a great many detective stories, and determined to try his hand as a cross-examiner. It was a trifling little incident that had led Tom to start in on his questioning. He noticed the fellow carried a club, and he asked:

"Halloo, Johnny, where did you get that club?"

"I cut it down in the woods."

"You cut it down in the woods, eh?"

"Yes."

"What makes you carry it?"

"I carry it for fun."

"It's a pretty stout stick."

"Yes."

"How long have you owned it?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"For fun."

The farm-boy was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"That stick has a history."

"Yes? That's funny."

"I'll tell you about it if you won't say anything to any one."

"Certainly not."

"Do you remember the night they had a dance in the house?"

"Yes."

"I sold that stick that night."

"You did?"

"Yes."

Tom was all attention at once.

"You sold it and bought it back again, eh? Why didn't you cut another?"

"That's where the fun comes in. I went over to the woods the next day to cut another, and I found my old stick again."

"Somebody bought it and threw it away, eh?"

"Yes."

"That's all very queer."

"Yes, that's what I've thought."

"Did you know the party who bought the stick?"

"Yes."

"Does he live in town?"

"Yes; he is one of the students."

"Well, ain't that all queer?"

"Yes."

Tom was talking as though he had no particular interest in the affair, but later on he made a startling discovery. Indeed, he had thought he was the smart fellow of the dialogue, but he learned to the contrary, and he learned that the farm-boy was quite a cunning little chap, and knew just all he was about during the whole time, and indeed the farm-boy was playing a part as well as our hero.

"So it was one of the students who bought the stick?"

"Yes."

"And he afterward threw it away?"

"Yes."

"You don't know why he bought it?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, now!"

"Yes; he bought it to give some one a crack on the head."

The farm-boy lowered his voice and spoke in a very significant manner.

"I'll bet you've got something to tell!" remarked Tom.

"You know now that I've got something to tell."

"What makes you say that, boy?"

"Because you are trying to find out something."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"What am I trying to find out?"

"You are trying to find out who gave you the crack on the head the night of the dance."

Tom gave a start. He was beaten at his own game.

"How do you know I received a crack on the head?"

"I know you did."

"Suppose I did?"

"You are trying to find out who cracked you."

"You know?"

"May be I do."

"Tell me."

"Will you tell me what you are going to do about it if I do tell you?"

"I will do nothing."

"You won't make a time over it?"

"No."

"You promise that?"

"Yes, I will; but how did you know I received a crack?"

"I'll tell you. I sold the stick to the fellow who hit you. I did not know why he wanted the stick when I sold it to him. But I followed him up, and I saw he gave some one a crack on the head. I did not know who got the crack until afterward, but I knew it was one of the students."

"And how did you find out it was I?"

"You were the lad who was laid up afterward, and then I made up my mind who it was."

"Why didn't you come and tell me about it?"

"I was afraid there would be trouble, and I didn't like to get mixed up in it; but after two or three days passed I thought I'd have a talk with you, so I just saw you come over here and I got the stick and showed up."

"What was your object?"

"I wanted you to ask me some questions, and now that you have done so may be I'll tell you all about it."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Go on and tell me all about it."

"I will."

"Do so."

"You're the lad who won the ball game for the scrubs against the regulars."

"I did my part."

"Yes, you did, and I like you. I won a quarter on the game."

"So much as that?"

"Yes; a fellow bet me a quarter to five cents the regulars would win, and I took the bet, and I like you."

"Go on and tell me about the stick."

"You remember the night of the dance?"

"Yes."

"Well, that night a young fellow came out of the house through the rear door. I met him just as he came down by the stables. I had this stick in my hand, and as he came along he said:

"Give me that stick?"

"I will for five cents," I answered.

"Well, he went down in his pocket quick



gularly mild for the season of the year, the large inclosed piazzas also were utilized.

Myra and Tom found a remote corner and sat down for a long chat.

"Were you ever in New York City?" asked Myra, when an opportunity in the conversation offered.

"I don't know," answered Tom, frankly.

"You don't know?" came the answer.

"No."

"That is strange. Your father and mother live in New York, do they not?"

"I don't know," came the answer, and a sad look settled upon Tom's face, and there followed a moment of silence.

It was Tom who broke the silence. He said: "Miss Hubbard, you may be angry with me when I tell you the truth, but I will say I have never sought to conceal the facts of my history."

"I will be angry?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I have a confession to make. I have done wrong."

"You have done wrong?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I should not have accepted your invitation to lead the dance with you."

"Are you a criminal?"

"No."

"Did you ever steal or commit a crime?"

"No."

"Then what is the matter? You say you have a confession to make?"

"Yes."

"What confession?"

"Mine is a strange history."

At that moment the music struck up.

"You need not tell me your history; you need not make a confession to me."

"Yes, I must."

"You must?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"There are reasons why I should."

"Do you really desire to tell me your history?"

"Yes."

"I do not ask you to do so."

"I must do it."

"I can not see why."

"When you have heard my story you will know why I should tell you."

Then came a moment's pause, and Tom said: "Suppose I plead sickness and go away, and let some one else finish the dance with you?"

"No, you shall first dance with me, and I shall ask you to accompany me home. I have no escort."

"Do not ask me."

"Yes, I shall ask you. As you desire to tell me your story you shall do so on the walk over to my home."

"As you wish it, I will accept your invitation."

The two returned to the parlor and the dance proceeded.

Meantime, the fellow Rolando had passed an unhappy time. He was mad with jealousy and he sought an opportunity to ask Myra for a single dance. She assented, and they glided about the room. Ralph would have danced all night, so intoxicated was he at the moment with delight and satisfaction, but Myra indicated that she desired to rest a moment.

"Can I see you home?" asked Ralph.

"I am sorry—"

"You go home with that fellow as your escort?"

"Yes."

"Did you ask him?"

"Mr. Rolando, you are dreadfully cross to-night!"

With these words Myra skipped away.

At length the dance came to a close, and Myra made an excuse to proceed to her home immediately. She did not stay for the bountiful supper that had been provided, and when she and Tom passed out of the door a sinister pair of eyes was fixed upon them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

As has been intimated, Tom Weir was a handsome fellow. He was not only singularly handsome, but a very manly fellow, and happily for him he possessed the blessed quality of personal magnetism to a large degree. His features were delicate and regular, his com-

plexion as clear as that of a babe, and his eyes were perfect models of expressiveness.

It was not at all strange that Myra Hubbard was pleased to make his acquaintance, and it is only fair to say that upon the eventful night when the incidents transpired that we have recorded, she was envied by all her friends and companions.

As Tom well knew, he had entered the seminary to study, and he imagined he had time only for so doing; yet it must be confessed that ever since the incident of the flower, when he stood at the bat in the ball-field, a bright picture had constantly been presented to his imagination.

He was not in love, but he was charmed, and certainly delighted in the society of the beautiful girl, and under certain conditions he might have gone on and permitted himself to be charmed, but there was a shadow over his life. He knew it, and he felt that it was wrong for him to permit false impressions to prevail concerning himself.

While Myra was preparing to go home Tom was left alone for a few moments, and had a chance to meditate, and the result was he muttered to himself:

"This will not do; I shall tell her all. It will be better for her, better for me. I am only Tom the bootblack after all."

As stated, the two young people departed from the house together, and there was a pair of wicked eyes fixed upon them, and to the owner of the eyes there came a whisper:

"She's dead gone on that fellow, Ralph."

The whisperer was Nelson Ward.

Ralph turned. His face was ghastly and his eyes gleamed with an angry light.

"No, she does not care a fig for him. He is fooling her. That fellow is a magician—he is a devil!"

"He has charmed Myra, that is certain."

Rolando made no answer but walked away, and a moment later he passed from the house by a rear entrance and started to run swiftly across the fields, and the direction he pursued was toward the mansion where Myra Hubbard resided with her father.

Meantime Tom and the lovely girl were walking slowly along the road. They had been talking about the incidents of the evening, when Tom suddenly said:

"Miss Hubbard, it is only right that I should tell you my history."

"Why are you so anxious to tell me your history?"

"I wish you to know the truth."

"Is there something terrible in the account of your life?"

"Yes."

There followed a moment's silence, and it was Tom who broke the silence with the remark:

"You asked me several commonplace questions to-night, and you did not know how much was really involved in your queries."

"If my questions annoyed you, I recall them."

"No; I am glad you did ask the questions, for it gives me an opportunity to tell you all the facts. You may think I am wealthy—or, rather, the son of wealthy parents—but such is not the fact. I am really a foundling."

"A foundling?" repeated Myra.

"Yes."

"What is a foundling?"

"I will tell you: I was placed in a public institution, when an infant, by unknown parties. The institution is called a foundling asylum. Sometimes infants are found on the street by the police, and they are carried to a foundling asylum. Whether I was found by an officer, or whether I was placed in the asylum by my relatives, I do not know. All I do know is, a card was attached to my clothing on which was written:

"This child's name is Thomas Weir. He has been baptized."

No name was signed to the card, and no one ever came to inquire after the child."

Myra listened, a chill running through her veins, and in a low voice she said:

"Then you know nothing about your parents?"

"No."

Our hero proceeded with his history, and as he concluded the two arrived opposite the residence of Myra's father. The girl had remained silent, and Tom said:

"I thought it only fair to tell you my his-

tory. I am no fool, and I know it is not right that you should notice me."

"I am so sorry for you, Mr. Weir!" said Myra.

"I am grateful for your sympathy; but you need not feel so very sorry, as I do not care because I am a foundling, or because I was once a bootblack. I shall make my way in the world, and it will be all the more to my credit some day; but you must not notice me any more. I have enjoyed your society, but I am a penniless youth, with the world before me and my career to make."

"You need not tell your history to any one else."

"Oh, there is no need to conceal the facts, and, besides, there are many who already know of my former occupation."

"Why did you tell it?"

"I do not desire to sail under false colors."

"I was told you were once a bootblack, but I did not believe it."

"Who told you?"

"That fellow Rolando. He hates you."

"Yes, I know he does; but I do not mind his hatred."

"Can I advise you?"

"Certainly."

"I would go to another school."

"Why?"

"I would go where they knew nothing of your history."

"They would soon know as much as they do here."

"But why should you make the facts public?"

"I'll tell you: I might go to some new school and I would win a friend, and I would be bound to tell the truth to that friend, as I told it to Hiram Perkins, and as I have told it to you."

"But if you went to another school you would not meet Rolando."

"I do not fear Rolando."

"He is a very vicious fellow, I think. I do not like him. My father appears to admire him, I do not. I think he is a very bad fellow at heart."

"Miss Hubbard, I can not run away from here because of Rolando, and that fellow may really prove a benefit to me."

"Prove a benefit to you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He has conceived a great dislike for me, and he will cause others to do the same, and the consequence will be that I will encounter less temptations to neglect my studies. I am here to study. I naturally crave fun and excitement, but this man's hatred will close many doors to me, and I will gain the time for study."

"But he may do you some harm."

"Why should he?"

"I can not tell you exactly, but I fear he will."

"You need not fear; and now, Miss Hubbard, I have told you my history, and I consider it wiser that you forget that you ever met me."

"Yes, it may be for the best!" came the answer, supplemented with the word "Good-night."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

TOM turned and walked away like one who had been offered a precious gift and had been compelled to refuse it. He was indeed sad for a few moments, as there ran through his mind that saddest of all sad refrains, "What might have been."

It was about two miles from Mr. Hubbard's house to the seminary, and by the road it was a roundabout walk, and Tom determined to make a short cut across the lots and through a copse of woods.

Tom had proceeded along, and had reached the copse of woods, and was lost in deep thought, walking with his head down and his eyes cast to the ground, and so deeply was he absorbed that he did not notice a figure spring from a clump of bushes and steal along after him.

He was on the little rustic bridge crossing a muddy little stream when suddenly he received a blow, and, reeling, fell over into the water.

A moment he was unconscious, but fortunately revived in time to avoid being drowned, and he clambered from the water that was only about knee-deep.

He looked around in every direction, but did not discover the least sign of the presence of any one.



and gave me a ten-cent piece, and away he went. I saw that he was excited, and I was sorry right away that I had let him have the club, and I said to myself, 'That fellow is up to something; I'll just follow him up and see what his game is.' I followed him, and he went over toward Mr. Hubbard's house, and then after awhile I saw him go along toward the woods, and I followed him. I lost sight of him for awhile, but came upon him just as he gave you that clip as you were in the middle of the bridge."

"Did you recognize me?"

"No, I did not; but I did recognize the fellow who hit you."

"Why didn't you give an alarm?"

"I was afraid."

"Why did you not come to my assistance?"

"I was running to help you, when I saw you crawl out of the creek, and then I ran away."

"You ran away?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I thought I might be accused of having hit you, so I ran off, and the next day I went over to the spot, and in the woods on the way I found my stick where it had been thrown."

"And how did you learn I was the boy who had been hit?"

"I asked around in my own way, and found you were the one who was laid up, and it was said you had met with a fall, so I made up my mind you were the one who had been struck."

"And you said nothing about it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I was waiting to learn whether you said anything about it."

"Now, tell me who my assailant was—tell me his name."

"If I do what will you do about it?"

"Nothing."

"You have made up your mind?"

"Yes."

"You see, I do not wish to get into any trouble. I got into a scrape once, and suspicion is around against me anyhow when anything happens, and that is the reason why I laid low."

"Tell me who hit me."

"You are determined not to say anything about it?"

"I am."

"How will you get square?"

"I will bide my time."

"There will be no arrests?"

"No."

"I can depend upon that?"

"Yes."

"Well, the fellow who hit you was Ralph Rolando."

"I knew it; but I had no real proof."

"And now you have the proof you will have him arrested?"

"No, I will not; I shall say nothing about it, and I do not want you to say anything either."

"You can bet I will say nothing, because that fellow would deny the whole business and say I was a liar, that I struck you myself, and the people round here would believe him."

"All right, we will keep our secret."

"And how will you get square?"

"I will wait for a chance, but when I do get square with him it will be in an open and fair manner. I'd never serve him as he has tried to serve me."

"You must look out for that fellow."

"Why?"

"He meant to kill you."

"No, I do not believe that."

"If you had been killed I would have been in a scrape."

"You?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"They would have found this stick, and they would know it had belonged to me. But it's lucky the way it all turned out, but you had better keep your eye on that fellow. Will you let him know that you have found out who hit you?"

"No, I will not."

Tom retired to his room, and he spent a long time lost in deep thought.

On the day following the incidents we have described our hero met Myra Hubbard down on the lake. She merely bowed to him coldly. In so doing she was merely carrying out our hero's advice; but it cut him, all the same, for, despite all his good resolutions, the fair girl had made a great impression upon him, and she was before his imagination continually, and again

there came to his heart the sad refrain, "What might have been."

Some months passed, the winter was over, and spring had come. Little had occurred in the school of particular moment. There had been no "run-ins" between Tom and Ralph Rolando. The two lads had avoided each other, and for reasons Tom had made few acquaintances. He had not set himself up as a leader, but had settled down to his studies; indeed, he had taken up several extra studies, and mingled but little with the other students, so that he was on neither very good nor bad terms with them.

During all this time, however, Rolando had maintained his position as a leader, and had also retained his popularity. He had made extra efforts to do so and had succeeded well.

Tom saw but little of Myra Hubbard. They had ceased even to recognize each other, even in the most distant manner, and Ralph, having discovered this state of affairs, appeared to be well satisfied. He believed in his heart that the revelations he had made concerning Tom were at the bottom of her conduct, and it made him happy to think he had given his rival such a terrible set-back.

Thus matters stood when the base-ball season again opened. Rolando's nine had played several games and had come out winners, and there was great talk of a second match between the scrubs and the regulars. The latter had strengthened their nine, and at length a match was arranged.

Henry Hurlburt had practiced with his nine, and had put in a claim that the so-called scrubs, as champions, should be the regularly recognized seminary team, and the claim had excited a great deal of discussion.

Henry Hurlburt had asked Tom to become a regular member of the team, but the latter had declined, as he declared he could not spare the time owing to the extra studies he had undertaken.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HENRY HURLBURT was greatly disappointed, but he was still hopeful, as he too had secured several new players, and in practice games his nine had shown up in good form. Indeed, there were many disinterested parties who claimed that the second nine could beat the first.

All that Tom would agree to was that he should be put on as a substitute or extra player.

At length the day arrived when the match was to come off, and the event caused great excitement. Large parties came from all the country round to see the game, as it was tacitly understood that should the second nine win, they were to become the regular seminary representative nine.

The night before the match was to take place Nelson Ward and Ralph Rolando were together.

"He will not play," said Ward.

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry."

"Why?"

"We will beat those fellows so bad they will not know that they ever played ball."

"You can beat them easier without that fellow."

"Bah! it will not be half the credit. No; I'd give fifty dollars if he were to play!"

"He will not play."

"He is cunning."

"Why?"

"He knows their nine will get knocked out, and then everybody will say it was because this Duke of New York was not on the team, and he will get more credit. Yes, he is cunning—he knows when to go in and when to stay out."

"But the other fellows are playing a big game."

"I know it; but I've got one of the best teams in the country. Yes, I can beat any college nine in America. I wouldn't be afraid to play the Yale or Harvard teams. I've got what I wanted—some good batters, who are also first-class all-round players. Why, we'll surely make a show of those fellows to-morrow!"

"Hurlburt expects to win."

"I know he does; but he'll be sick after the game. I don't like that fellow any way."

"I don't see as you've got anything to complain of; you've knocked the Duke of New York all out."

"How?"

"Myra Hubbard don't notice him nor speak about him, and she is saying that your team will win."

"Yes; but do you know she is very cool toward me?"

"She will get over that. You were very rude to her, you know, one spell there, just after that dance."

"I know, and she deserved it."

"Then if you were down on her first you can not complain."

"I wish that fellow would leave here."

"Who?"

"Weir."

"I should think you would prefer to have him stay. You have taken all the starch out of him. He is as quiet as a sick cat under a barn."

"Yes; but somehow I feel that he may come to the front any day. One thing is certain: he is studying like the Old Boy, and he will carry off all the first honors at examination."

"Let him; you will carry off the honors to-morrow."

There was a great crowd present on the following afternoon to witness the great ball match, and opinions were discussed as to the outcome of the game.

There was some disappointment expressed when it became known that Tom Weir was not to play. Still there were many who backed their hopes on the second nine, and when the latter appeared upon the field for preliminary practice they received a magnificent reception, and their movements were closely watched, and one of the professors said to Ralph:

"You will have to look sharp to-day, Rolando, or the scrub nine will steal your laurels."

"Let him boast who taketh off his armor," came the answer.

"You're right, my boy. I like to hear you talk that way; and are all your team in good condition?"

"Yes, sir, my full nine will turn out to play."

When the regulars came on the field they received even a greater ovation than had been tendered to the second nine. The first nine were still the favorites, it was evident.

At length the game was called and the play started in well. Both sides were retired without a run; but in the second inning the regulars struck what is called a streak of batting, and they scored two runs.

It was Ralph who led off, and the spurt was received with wild acclamation.

The second and third innings were played, and the first nine added one run to their score, and the comment passed around, "It will be a walk-over;" and at the end of the seventh inning the regulars had added two more runs to their score, and it stood six to nothing.

"It will be a whitewash," was the comment.

In the ninth inning the second nine were retired, and the game closed nine to nothing, and an inning to spare in favor of the regulars.

That same night there was great rejoicing among the friends of the regulars, and the friends of the second nine were correspondingly cast down.

Tom Weir had been a witness to the game, and had stood afar off, and had made no comments.

Myra Hubbard was also present, and at the close of the game she presented a bouquet to the captain of the winning nine.

It was a great day for Rolando, and had he conducted himself modestly all would have been well; but he talked a great deal and very indiscreetly, and, among other statements, he said:

"Had that Duke played we would have beaten them more yet."

That same evening Henry Hurlburt stopped in at Tom's room, and his first remark proved that he did not agree with Rolando, as he exclaimed:

"Had you played, Tom, we would have won the game."

"What makes you think so?"

"You would have given our boys confidence."

"But there will have to be another game; it stands one and one."

"I know, and I shall let it stand that way. Our boys can't recover their confidence. If we had won to-day's game it would have been all right."

"If you had beaten them they would have challenged you."

"I know it."

"Challenge them for the odd game, old man."

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I DARE not do it; this has been a bad day for me."



"Why?"  
 "I calculated upon winning."  
 "But it's a stand-off; you won one, and they won one."  
 "I know it; and they shall not have the chance to win the odd game."  
 "Don't let them win it; win it yourself."  
 "No; they are too much for us. But do you know that Rolando is blowing around that he is only sorry you were not in our nine."  
 "He would like to have laid me out, eh?"  
 "That's it."  
 "Challenge them again."  
 "Will you play?"  
 "Yes, I will, on one condition."  
 "Well?"  
 "Let me pitch."  
 "Let you pitch?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Certainly I will."  
 "You will?"  
 "I'll be glad to do it."  
 "Let me pitch, and we'll give them the same dose they gave you to-day."  
 "Can you do it?"  
 "Yes; but you must not let on that I am to be in the game until the day before the match comes off."  
 "Why not?"  
 "I have my reasons."  
 "And do you really think we can win?"  
 "I will assure you a victory."  
 "And that will give us the series?"  
 "Yes."  
 "By George! I'll send him a challenge at once."  
 "Yes, do it; but keep mum about my playing."  
 "I will, and Tom, if we beat them I'm your brother for life."  
 "All right, we'll beat 'em. I wanted to see them win the game to-day."  
 "You did?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Why?"  
 "I wanted that fellow Rolando to talk and blow around—I knew he would."  
 "And it will be a worse come-down for him if we win the odd game."  
 "Yes."

Henry went away quite jubilant, called a meeting of his nine, got them to consent to another game, and a formal challenge was sent the next day, and it soon became known in all quarters that the odd game was to be played.

When Hiram Perkins heard of it he stopped in Tom's room and said:

"Why, the second nine have challenged the regulars again."

"I know it."

"I won't play," said Hiram.

"Why not?"

"That fellow Rolando has had triumph enough. I will not be one to give him another. Why, if we play another game the town won't hold him. That fellow is going round like a madman now."

"He is, eh?"

"Hang it! if you had played they would not have beaten us so badly; you would have got in at least of one of your 'homers.'"

"Do you think so?"

"Don't you?"

"Yes."

"But now they will knock the 'stuffing' out of us."

"Suppose I play in the next game?"

"Eh?"

"Suppose I play in the next game?"

Hiram's eyes brightened.

"Do you mean it?"

"Certainly I do, if you will promise not to say anything about it."

Rolando received the challenge with delight. He had become quite a hero, and he gloried in his new distinction. He met his friend Ward and said:

"We've got 'em now."

"How's that?"

"Hurlburt has sent us a challenge for the third game."

"And will you play it?"

"Will I?" retorted Ralph, with the usual emphasis.

"You're foolish!"

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"That fellow, the Duke, has been persuaded to play, I'll bet you a cooney."

"That's just what I want."

That same afternoon, in a practice game,

Henry Hurlburt went to center field; it was only a fungo game, but he got the batters to send him a great many balls.

"I see the scheme," said Ward, who was looking on with Ralph.

"What is the scheme?"

"Weir is to pitch."

"How do you know?"

"Don't you see Hurlburt is practicing for center field?"

"That will suit me."

"I am sorry."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, it would be better not to play the third game; everybody thinks now you can beat 'em."

"So we can."

"You know as well as I do that Weir is a hummer."

"One man can not win a game."

"One pitcher can."

"It will take a good one."

"Remember, he pitched you out once."

"Yes, and I want to get square with him."

It would be hard to convey an idea of the excitement following the announcement of the probable playing of the third game, and at length, when on the day before the battle Hiram announced the fact as described in the opening paragraph of this story that the Duke of New York was to pitch for the scrub nine the expectancy became intense.

The opinion, however, prevailed that the regulars would win; but Hiram claimed that Rolando would be knocked out, and Ward, hearing his declaration, said:

"I'll make you a bet."

"I am not a better."

"That's the way with you fellows; you talk but you won't bet. You have no idea that the second nine will win."

"Yes, I have."

"You feel sure?"

"Yes."

"Dead sure?"

"Yes."

"You think because Weir is going to pitch it's a sure thing?"

"Yes."

"And you are dead sure?"

"Yes, I am."

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you."

"I won't bet."

"No, I only want to make an agreement."

"What is your agreement?"

"If the regulars win you shall hold your head under the school pump and ten boys selected by me will give you a douse. If the second nine wins I will let you douse me."

"I don't want to go into that agreement."

"I know you don't; you're only a blower."

Ward spoke in a very tantalizing way, when another of the second nine said:

"I'll make that wager with you."

"No; I only want to make it with Perkins, he has been blowing so loud."

Hiram was really irritated, and at length he said:

"You're as sure of winning as I am."

"Yes."

"I'll tell you what I'll do; if you'll go me two to one I'll bet you."

"Two to one?"

"Yes."

"Name your bet."

## CHAPTER XL.

Hiram hesitated about making his offer, and Ward still giped him, until finally Hiram said:

"You are not worth making a bet with; but I'll make one with Rolando. Now go tell him."

"I will."

Ward did tell Rolando, but made the whole affair appear in a different light, and evilly disposed Ralph thought he saw a chance to drive Tom Weir from the school. He thought it would be the best joke in the world to have Tom under the town pump, and he said to Ward:

"You tell Hiram I'll make the wager with his friend Weir."

Hiram would not repeat the challenge to Tom, but Ward, who was as anxious as his friend Rolando to see our hero humiliated, did go and make a formal challenge to Tom, and the latter accepted the challenge; and when Hiram heard of the wager he was surprised beyond measure, and he ran to Tom and protested.

"Tom, you're a fool!"

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It's a put-up scheme to humiliate you."

"But how about Rolando?"

"He will back out if he loses."

"He will?"

"Yes."

"If we win that game he will be ducked under that pump as sure as your name is Hiram Perkins."

"This will lead to trouble, Tom."

"No; it's only a bit of fun."

"It will not be fun if Rolando loses."

"Not to him, but to us."

"He will be mad."

"It's his own challenge; he sent it to me."

"They will beat us, Tom, and it would kill me to see you ducked."

"You won't see me ducked; but you will see Rolando under the pump as sure as that game ever comes off!"

The news of the strange wager spread all over town, and as it was looked upon as only a good joke, one way or the other, no opposition was made to the carrying out of the scheme.

Ward, however, began to feel shaky at the last, and he said to Ralph:

"I'd withdraw that bet if I were you."

"What! and lose such a good chance? No, no!"

"It may lead to trouble."

"What care I? That fellow will go under that pump or leave town, or be branded as a liar and a sneak!"

"Oh, he won't back out!"

"Then it will do him good—and I know it will me."

"But—"

"But what?"

"Suppose they should win?"

"Win?"

"Yes."

"Those fellows beat us?"

"Yes, they did once, you remember, when this fellow played."

"Oh, you've no heart; we will whitewash 'em again."

"I think you will; but still there is the chance."

"To lose?"

"Yes."

"Never! It will be the softest game we ever played. Those fellows are all scared out of their wits. No, no; folly! but it will be a gay time for me to-morrow when we run that fellow to the pump."

"I am sorry this bet was made. There is bad feeling between you and this Weir."

"So much the better. We'll wet up his feelings a little."

"But I fear."

"What?"

"The possibility."

"That they may win?"

"Yes."

"You need have no fear. My boys are in better trim than ever. I've had plenty of practice, and that fellow will come in fresh. We will annihilate them."

"He is not as fresh as you think. He has been practicing every day with Henry Hurlburt, and Hurlburt is confident his nine will win, and you know Hurlburt is a good player and has plenty of nerve."

"Bah! wait and see. You have no nerve."

"I have in a game."

"Well, be prepared to play your best, and then be ready to march to the pump and see us christen a fellow who thinks so much of himself; and I say, Ward, be sure and let all the girls know what is going to happen. I want them all there, it will be such fun!"

"Yes, if you win the game."

"Nonsense! I tell you we can't lose."

"But suppose you should?"

"We can't."

The day at length dawned when the great match was to take place, and the excitement was as great as it had been on former occasions, and, if possible, greater.

At an early hour the people began to assemble on the ball-ground, and it was evident from the start that there would be gathered the largest crowd that had ever assembled there.

When the two nines appeared upon the field the whole assemblage gave them a greeting.

Ralph Ronaldo, however, was the hero of the day, and he felt as proud as the general of an army.

The regulars went first to field for practice, as they were first at the bat. The two captains



had tossed for choice, and Henry Hurlburt had won.

While the regulars were practicing, the second nine boys stood together in a group, and Henry called our hero aside and said:

"You got us into this scrape, old man."  
 "Do you feel that way about it?"  
 "Those fellows are in fine form."  
 "So are your men."  
 "You must pull us out—we depend upon you."

"You can."  
 "If we lose the game, I go home."  
 "And I go under the pump," said Tom, with a laugh.  
 "That's so, and you will deserve it."  
 "If I go under that pump I will leave here with you."  
 "It's a go."  
 "But, Henry, don't lose heart."  
 "I'll do the best I can."  
 "You will?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Then as sure as your name is Henry Hurlburt, Rolando goes under the pump!"

## CHAPTER XLI.

WHEN it came to the turn of the second nine to take the field for practice, Tom, as he had arranged with Henry, went to center field. The movement was a blind, as Tom did not wish Rolando to know until the last moment that he was to take the pitcher's box.

Our hero had not forgotten the fact that the fellow Rolando had dealt him that terrible blow with the club on the night of the dance, and although Weir was a noble fellow, he was not altogether as perfect as some heroes in Sunday-school books, and a desire to get square some day lurked way down in his heart.

"Hallo!" cried Ward, when he saw Tom go to center field, "that fellow ain't going to pitch, after all."

"I reckon he's been tried and found wanting, and I'm sorry."

"Why?"  
 "I would have enjoyed knocking him out of the box."

"It may be better, after all. I tell you I shall feel better when this game is won."

"You will?"  
 "Yes."

"You fear we will not win?"  
 "Do you see those fellows are playing with great confidence?"

"Bah! they always practice well; but when it comes to the game—"

"It would be terrible if you were compelled to go under the pump."

"I go under the pump?"  
 "Yes; the whole town knows about the wager, and every one is waiting to see the fun."

"They shall see it."

"But if it is you who goes under?"  
 "Ward, you're crazy!"

"I don't know. Do you remember you said many times that fellow was the devil?"

"The Duke of New York?"  
 "Yes."

"We'll make a queer duke of him. Yes, the time has come to open up on that fellow. He will have to leave town after he goes under the pump."

"He may leave town before."

"No, he will not. The boys are all posted and ready, and the moment the game is over they will make a rush for him."

"I hope it comes out all right; but between you and me and the town I am sorry the bet was made. I tell you again there's blood in that fellow's eye. I saw him talking to Hurlburt, and there was a wicked smile on his face."

"We'll wash that smile off under the pump."

"And you are dead sure of winning?"

"Certainly! they have not the ghost of a chance."

At that moment there came the signal—practice time was up.

The game was about to commence. The regulars, as stated, were first to the bat, and when the opposing nine took their positions Tom Weir advanced to the pitcher's box.

"Aha! what did I tell you?" said Ward.

"Well?"  
 "Don't you see?"

"Weir is to pitch?"  
 "Yes."

"I'm glad of it."  
 "I am not. I tell you now I'm afraid of that fellow."

The first man of the regulars went to the bat

and he struck out, and upon walking away he was met by Rolando, to whom the batter said:

"That fellow is a terror! I never faced such balls."

The man who had struck out was a good batter, and Ward said again:

"Just as I told you, Rolando!"

"Bah! Wait until I get to the bat; I'll break him up!"

"He'll just lay for you!"  
 "Will he?"

"You'll see."  
 "You're a croaker, Ward."

"I'll admit I'm scared. You heard what Cary said."

The next batter also cut the air three times; and he, too, as he walked from the plate, met Rolando, and said:

"Hang that fellow, he's a terror!"

Rolando still kept up his courage, and said:

"I'll soften him down for you!"

The third man went to the bat and was retired, and the regulars took the field, and there came no demonstration.

Myra Hubbard was present, and it was observed by one person that her face was pale—that she watched the game with intense interest—and the one who observed the fact was Rolando.

The latter took his position in the box, and he too pitched a great inning, and the three batters of the second nine were retired in one-two-three order.

The regulars again went to the bat, and the dose was repeated—each man struck out.

Rolando did begin to feel a little uncomfortable.

The second nine again came to the bat, and the first batter made a base; the second man tipped out; the third batter made a base after three strikes, as the catcher let the ball pass him, and the man who was on first reached second base, and Tom Weir took the bat.

The excitement was intense.

"A homer now!" came the call from a man in the crowd.

There followed a dead silence. Rolando was deliberate, and sent in a good swift curve ball.

Tom reached for it, caught it pretty firm, and sent it over the second baseman's head, and it dropped between the former and center fielder. It was a good safe base hit. The man on second ran in and the man who was on first ran to third and Weir reached first base.

It was one run and two men on bases, and only one man out.

The next batter went out, but a slip by the catcher let the man on third run in, and he was saved by a close decision.

Two runs and two men out.

The next batter struck out, and the regulars came in from the field.

"By ginger, Ralph, it looks bad!" said Ward.

"Shut up, will you?" commanded Rolando.

Rolando had arranged to be the last man to the bat on his side. He hoped one or two of his men would make bases, and he intended to bat them in, but alas! the two batters went out. One of them did raise a fungo hit which was taken by the second baseman, and Rolando came to the bat.

There followed again a dead stillness.

Weir was as cool as a cucumber, and in a joking way he said:

"You can't hit me, bub!"

The first ball went wide; the second was a teaser and slipped by the striker and was called a strike; the third ball went fair and Rolando missed it; the fourth ball also was a fair ball, and again Ralph cut the air, and with an oath he threw down the bat and retired from the plate, and the score stood two runs and an inning in favor of the second nine.

"It looks bad," was the remark made aloud in the crowd.

The second nine were retired without a run, and so also were the regulars, and so the game proceeded until a second time Tom Weir stood at the plate, bat in hand.

## CHAPTER XLII.

TOM was laughing as he took his position, and he called out in a tantalizing tone:

"Now give me one for the pump."

The taunt unmanned Rolando. He lost his temper and sent in a vicious ball; but it did not curve right. Tom caught it and knocked out a clean home run, and there arose a tremendous shout.

The result broke Rolando all up, and his demoralization was complete when the next batter

of the second nine knocked out a two-bagger, and the following batter a single, which sent the other man home.

There rose a groan, and the comment passed around:

"Rolando is rattled!"

The pitcher recovered his nerve in time, however, to prevent any more runs, and the game proceeded until Ralph again went to the bat.

Ward had warned him to keep his temper and not to tantalize Tom, and Rolando called out:

"I'll give you one for the pump now."

"Will you? Well, ta-ta, this time," cried Tom, and he sent in a ball, and Rolando cut the air, although he made a desperate effort, and twice again he cut the air and retired, and as he walked over to where Ward stood the latter said:

"We're gone."

Rolando's face was set.

"They will beat us," said Ward.

"We are beat," admitted Rolando.

"And you will go under the pump?"

Rolando's face was livid and his lips blue as he said:

"We'll wait and see."

"We can't win."

As Ward had prophesied, so it proved. The second nine won the game—eleven to nothing, giving the regulars a worse beating than they had received themselves, and there was great excitement.

Before the close of the last inning Tom was standing to one side, when a fair hand beckoned to him. Our hero recognized Myra Hubbard, and idly walked over to where she stood. They were alone, some distance from any one, and Myra said:

"Is it true you had a wager with Rolando?"

"Yes."

"And you will win the game?"

"Yes."

"And he is to go under the pump?"

"Yes."

"It remains with you to enforce the wager?"

"Certainly."

"And you will make him submit to the humiliation?"

"Certainly I will."

"Oh, no, do not!"

"If they had won, he would have made me go there."

"I know it, but you must be more merciful."

"He shall go under the pump."

"No, no!"

"Do you know the wager was his own proposition?"

"Was it?"

"Yes; and it was made with the hope that he would humiliate me."

"You have now triumph enough."

"But I must crown it, and a wash will not hurt him."

"You do not know—"

"Yes, I do; he is a revengeful fellow, and that is the reason I shall exact the full terms of the wager. I do not fear him."

"Mr. Weir, as a special favor to me—the only one I will ever ask—you will not enforce the penalty."

"You ask a great deal," answered Tom.

"I know it; but you will grant my request?"

"How can I?"

"When the game is over go to him and say: 'Mr. Rolando, our wager was a joke. I know you would not demand its fulfillment from me; I will not from you.'"

"I can not grant your request."

"Oh, yes, do! See his face—see how he suffers. Your triumph is complete enough."

"But you do not know all."

"All what?"

"All the circumstances."

"But I know you."

"You know me?"

"Yes, I know you are too kind and generous, under all the circumstances, to enforce the penalty attached to the wager."

"Miss Hubbard, you once did me a great honor; I can not refuse your request."

"And you will not enforce the wager?"

"I will not."

"Thank you—thank you!"

Tom walked away as the inning closed.

The regulars went in for their last inning, and, as intimated, failed to make a score, and when the game was all over there was a rush in upon the field, and some of the village boys shouted:

"To the pump! to the pump!"

Rolando stood pale and trembling, and Tom approached him. There was quite a crowd



pressing in upon them, and Tom in a clear, firm voice said:

"Mr. Rolando, I know that if you had won you would have been satisfied with the triumph of the game; so am I, and our bet is off."

A great shout greeted Tom's words, and the news spread that there was to be no douse at the pump.

The crowd soon began to break away. It had been a long game, and there was laughing and talking and commenting on all sides.

Our hero went to the little building that was used as a dressing-room, and after changing his clothes he came forth and started alone to go to the seminary. He had proceeded but a short distance when he saw Myra Hubbard proceeding alone just ahead of him. He slackened his pace, but the girl came to a stop, and he saw that she desired to speak to him, and when he came near Myra said:

"You acted nobly to-day. You are a true gentleman."

Having thus spoken, she turned and walked rapidly away.

#### CHAPTER XLIII.

THAT night there was a great rejoicing among the "doms" of the seminary. We mean by the "doms" the boys who were not among the chosen, but those who were looked upon as no good by the fellows who it may be said were on top when it came to shaping affairs pertaining to the sports of the school.

Our hero had become quite a favorite. Everybody was talking of his superb play, and his magnanimity in waiving the bet also won him high plaudits.

Hiram and Tom were sitting in the latter's room, and the former said:

"This has been a great day for you, Tom."

"Well, yes, I have enjoyed the day."

"You are the hero of three counties."

"Hiram," said Tom, "it's a nice thing to win."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"I thought not."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, you appear to take the whole day's doings as a matter of course."

"You think so, eh?"

"Yes."

"You're mistaken, Hiram. This has been a day of greater triumph than you think, and I enjoy my honors to the full. Yes, I am as proud as a peacock."

"You have a strange way of showing your pride."

"Still water runs deep. Quiet people, who do not blow their own trumpets, are sometimes more egotistical at heart than others who are eternally expatiating on their own merits. Yes, I am really proud of to-day's triumph—very proud."

"I am glad of it; and it was a nice thing for you to let that bet go by. I was disappointed at first, but I am glad now."

"You are, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It may make Rolando a friend of yours after all."

"That fellow will never be my friend."

"He can not help it. You were very generous, and everybody is saying so."

"I am not entitled to as much credit as may appear; but we shall see. One thing I can tell you: Rolando and I will never be friends. That fellow will always hate me; and, to tell the truth, I really wish I had never met him. He will be a life enemy."

"Bah! when you leave school you will forget all about each other, and after what has occurred to-day, he certainly must pretend to be your friend."

"He will not. He will hate me more bitterly than ever."

"I do not believe it."

"Wait and see."

While Perkins and Tom were talking together, a conversation was also in progress between Ward and Rolando. The former said, as he joined his friend:

"Well, that bootblack has had a big triumph to-day."

"Yes."

"It has been a bad day for us, Rolando."

"For me it has been."

"That fellow has won all the honors, and

everybody is talking about his magnanimity, and I must say it was very generous of him."

"What was very generous?"

"His refusing to enforce the bet."

"You think it was very generous?"

"Yes."

"You are a fool, Ward!"

"I am?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say I am a fool?"

"You can't see."

"Well, what do I miss?"

"That fellow is as cute as the devil. He is a devil, and his letting me up was the worst shot he could give me, and he knows it."

"Then you do not give him any credit?"

"No."

"And you do not feel bound to be on friendly terms with him?"

"I will follow that fellow the world over until I get square."

"I fear you are wrong."

"But you don't know anything."

"I will tell you something."

"Go ahead."

"I think it will be good policy for you to make friends with him."

"You do, eh?"

"Yes, I do."

"Ward, you can't see through a thin veil!"

"I can't?"

"No."

"Sing out your tenor, Ralph! Where am I blind?"

"You give him all the credit of the affair to-day."

"I was giving him the credit."

"You're praising the wrong party."

"Explain."

"I owe the thanks to Myra Hubbard for not going under the pump."

"Get out!"

"It's true."

"Well, that's better yet!"

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"You're blind as a bat!"

"But how do you know you owe the credit to her?"

"I know it well enough."

"But how do you know? It may be you only guess it, and you may be wrong."

"I do not guess it."

"Let a fellow into your secret."

"You saw that fellow and Myra talking together?"

"Yes."

"She was asking him to waive the bet."

"She was?"

"Yes."

"You only suspect the fact."

"I know it is true."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true."

"You are dead sure?"

"I am."

"Did you overhear what passed?"

"No; but some one else did—who, it does not make any difference. That fellow was persuaded to let up on me, and it was Myra who interceded."

"By ginger! that's good news. It shows she thinks more of you than you thought."

"But it proves that she merely pities me. Hang her! I'll learn to hate her some day. Her interest was in that bootblack. She saw it would be a big thing for him—would make him a hero. She was much smarter than he."

"There is something in what you say after all."

"I should say so."

"What will you do?"

"Time will tell."

"You will not make up with that fellow?"

"Make up with him? I'll down him as sure as my name is Ralph Rolando. I'll tell you something—these fellows here think I'm a Cuban. I am a little of everything when it comes to breed. There is Corsican blood in me; my grandparents were Corsicans, and I inherit their temperament. I'll see the day when I will get square with this fellow."

Ward was not altogether a brute, and he said:

"Ralph, you are carrying this thing too far. I'd drop the whole matter if I were you."

"Drop it?"

"Yes."

"When I drop that fellow will be on his knees to me."

"I couldn't be as revengeful as you are."

"Oh, no; you are not of my kin; but you wait and see."

"You can never get the better of that fellow—I tell you that."

"Halloo! you have turned against me, eh? It's the old story, 'The king is dead—long live the king.'"

"No, I do not like that fellow; but I fear you are going too far for your own good. You are rich; why don't you leave the school?"

"No, I'll not leave the school until he does, and then I'll leave to follow him. I'll follow him all his life until I get square."

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

A WEEK passed, and during that week there was a great deal of talk, and then it became rumored about that there was to be a reorganization of the nine. Some of the second nine were to be put on the regular nine, and it was proposed that Tom Weir should be taken on as one of the pitchers.

The proposition was made to our hero, and he absolutely declined to go on the nine, and so matters went on without the occurrence of any incident of special interest until one night Tom Weir walked off for a stroll. He had walked a long distance and had remained out until a late hour; indeed, he had transgressed the seminary rules, and he knew he would be compelled to sneak to his room to avoid censure on the part of the president of the seminary.

Tom, as a student, had been a great success, and a month later he knew he would pass his examination, when he proposed to enter college.

Great hopes were in his heart, and bright dreams of a grand future were running through his mind, and he was deeply absorbed, and had failed to observe that his steps were being "dogged." It was a lonely part of the country where he had chosen to walk, and he had reached the loneliest part of the road. There was not a house within a mile in any direction, and he had no idea of danger. As he proceeded along, as stated, lost in deep and absorbing thought, he at length came to a part of the road where a stone wall ran parallel with the highway, and suddenly he heard the sharp report of a pistol, and a bullet whistled over his head. Tom came to a stand-still for an instant. He was completely dazed, but he was a nervy fellow and very quick-witted. He had learned to have his wits about him always. There was no moon, but the night was clear, and he saw a little cloud of smoke curl away from the stone wall at a point just opposite to where he stood in the road.

Tom was unarmed, but he sprang toward the wall, and there came a second shot, and, very fortunately, again the marksmanship was bad, but one fact was fully assured: the shots were intended for him; indeed, there had been a deliberate attempt to murder him. Our hero reached the wall undeterred by the second shot, and as he leaped over a figure rose and confronted him. Tom saw the gleaming barrel of a pistol leveled at him, and quick as thought he leaped forward; an accident saved his life. The hammer of the pistol closed down on an imperfect cap, and Tom was upon his assailant, and knocked the weapon from his grasp; at the same instant he exclaimed:

"Rolando, you have tried to murder me."

The two youths stood confronting each other. Tom had knocked the weapon from his assailant's grasp, but Rolando still held a cane in his hand.

"Why have you sought to take my life?"

Rolando's eyes glittered and snapped like those of a basilisk.

"I will kill you!"

"And why should you kill me?"

"For lying about me."

"Lying about you?"

"Yes."

"You will never kill me, Rolando. You are a miserable, cowardly scoundrel. I knew that the first moment I set eyes on you, and this is the second time you have made an attempt on my life."

"It's false."

"No, it is not false, and you know it. You sought to kill me the night of the dance."

"And I will kill you."

"No, you shall not kill me."

"I will kill you to-night. You have lied about me."

"I have lied about you?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"Myra Hubbard."

"I never said one word against you to that



lady, but I will say she knew you better than I did. She warned me against you."

"She did?"

"Yes, she did."

"She warned you against me?" repeated Ralph.

"Yes, she did."

"It's false."

Rolando's utterance was choked with passion. The young fellow was wild with anger and his bitter desire for vengeance.

"It is true; and these two attempts to kill me will prove how well she discerned your character. Just to think of it—you are at heart a murderer. You have sought to kill one who never harmed you in any way."

"You have harmed me."

"How?"

"I have told you how you came to harm me. You are a miserable, low-bred street gamin of New York, and you commenced lying about me from the start, and I shall kill you."

"Listen to me, Ralph Rolando. As I said before, this is the second time you have sought to take my life. I can stand this no longer. You must leave this town or I will prefer charges against you, and you will go where you belong, and where you will eventually end your days, any way."

Rolando laughed, and said:

"You will prefer charges against me?"

"Yes, I will."

"Who will believe your charges?"

"I can prove them."

"You can prove them?"

"Yes, I can."

"How?"

"I have a witness."

Rolando looked around in a furtive manner, and then asked:

"Where is your witness?"

"Oh, I do not need a witness to-night; but then there was a witness to your former attempt on my life."

"There was, eh?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"I shall not tell you or you might attempt to kill him; but I have a witness, and I tell you now you will leave the seminary at once or you will go to jail."

"I will, eh?"

"Yes; I shall make good my threat."

"You will?"

"I will as I live. I will stand this no longer."

"You will never make charges against me!"

said Rolando, and there followed a startling incident.

## CHAPTER XLV.

WE have said Rolando held a cane in his hand, and as he made the remark recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, he suddenly drew a long blade from the cane and made a lunge at Tom.

Weir was no ordinary youth, as has been intimated. There are those who really appear to bear charmed lives. Some men will fall victims to the most trifling accident the first time encountered. There are others who have passed through as many perils by land and sea as the Apostle Paul is said to have encountered, and they go through all these perils unscathed. It so seemed to be the fate of our hero. During his short career he had met with many very thrilling and narrow escapes. Indeed, considering the fact that he was a foundling, his being in existence at all was a marvel, and during our narrative we have recorded how he had been stricken down once and twice shot at by Rolando, and again, the fourth time, an attempt had been made upon his life. As Rolando made the lunge his foot slipped. In his eagerness and blind rage he lost his footing. He fell forward, the blade was broken, and he lay a moment helpless at our hero's feet.

It would have been a natural impulse for Tom to have set upon him; but he permitted his wicked and desperate assailant to arise, and again the two stood facing each other.

"Well," said Tom, in a tone of bitter sarcasm, "you are a nice fellow!"

"Hang you! I'll kill you yet!"

"You will never kill me, Rolando—no, never! I bear a charmed life against you, and some day you may force me to send you where in my heart I fear you deserve to be. You are a mean, sneaking imp!—one of the most detestable and cold-blooded assassins in intent I ever met! But I will not serve you as you deserve now. I will bide my time and give you a chance to consider

what a wretch you are, and I will aid you to so consider by cooling your heated blood a little."

As Tom spoke he advanced toward the wretched youth, and Rolando sprang upon him. The two lads clinched and a short struggle followed. Tom proved his superiority in an instant. He flung Rolando to the ground as though he had been a mere infant, and pummeled him well, and then dragged him toward the creek, and as he drew him along, Tom said:

"You once sent me into the creek. I'll send you there to cool off."

Rolando cursed and raved, but he was too weak and exhausted to make much resistance, and into the creek he went, and the water was up to his waist. He floundered around a moment and then crawled out on the bank.

Tom stood to receive him, and said:

"Rolando, we understand each other now. Mark my words: I give you just one week to invent some excuse for leaving this town. If you remain after that I will prefer charges against you and have you sent to jail."

"You will prefer charges against me?"

"I will."

"What will they amount to now? Listen to me: I will not leave the school, and I will prefer charges against you and prove them."

"You can prove no charges against me."

"You shall see whether I can or not, hang you!"

"One word, you miserable cur. You know I am not a liar, and you envy me because I am not. I tell you I have a witness who saw you strike me the night of the dance. The fellow stands ready to testify against you. He fully identified you, and can establish his identification, and I will keep my word. You leave town as I bid you, or by all that's true and honest, I will expose you and have you punished."

There followed a moment's silence, and then Rolando said:

"I have an offer to make."

"Proceed."

"I hate you."

"I know it and I know also I have given you no cause to hate me."

"I do hate you, all the same, and I do not wish to leave this town. You are a poor miserable cuss, and you need money. You are in my way. If you will leave the town I will give you five hundred dollars, and forget I ever knew you."

"I would not leave town if you were to give me fifty thousand dollars—no, sir; but leave the town you must or meet the consequences, and, come what may, if you do not go I will expose you; and now good-night."

Tom leaped the wall and started along the road, and as he walked toward the village he muttered:

"It does not seem possible that the fellow could be such a rascal. I can hardly realize myself that he really is a murderer at heart, but as I live, four times he has actually attempted to murder me in cold blood."

Tom reached his room but did not go to sleep. He could not sleep, and he paced the floor all the night through, and in the morning Hiram entered his room.

"What is the matter, Tom, you have not slept?"

"No."

"What is the matter?"

"Overstudy, I reckon."

"You were out late last night."

"How do you know?"

"I was out late myself, and when I came in I entered your room, and I lay awake a long time and you were still absent."

"Yes, I took a long walk to overcome my restlessness."

"You must not study so hard."

"I will look out. You are very kind to show such interest in me; but do not tell any one of my condition."

Rolando did not appear in school that day, and it was stated that he was sick. The days passed and he did not appear, and then it became rumored that he was very sick, and the rumor proved to be correct—the fellow had taken a severe cold.

Two weeks passed, and Rolando was confined to his room, and at last came the announcement that he was to leave the town and return to New York. A day was set for his departure, and no lad ever received such testimonials of good-will as he received, and never was his popularity made so patent as it was in the expressions of general regret at his departure.

All this time Tom had held his own counsel. He knew that bouquets were sent to Rolando's

rooms, and that suddenly he had become a real hero in the eyes of the general public. Even Hiram Perkins at the last said one day to our hero:

"Rolando is a good fellow at heart, and if it were not for the enmity between you two, I should be sorry he is going away."

Tom made no answer, but he knew well that there was no more undeserving wretch in the land than this same Ralph Rolando, and our hero also knew that he and the fellow would be sure to meet again some day, and there would follow a terrible reckoning between them.

Rolando at length departed, and a few days later there came an announcement that caused even greater surprise and regret.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

THE startling announcement was the fact that Mr. Hubbard had decided to go to New York to reside permanently. The gentleman's health had not been good for over a year, and change and the scientific treatment of New York physicians had been recommended.

Tom, when he heard the news, felt badly, for despite all his efforts to banish a recollection of the beautiful face of Myra from his mind he had failed. She had enthroned herself as the day-star of all his ambitions; but when he heard of her intended departure for New York he was sad indeed, and he murmured:

"It is all over, and I was a fool ever to have indulged a hope. In New York she will rise to become an elegant young lady; she will meet elegant gentlemen—handsome, accomplished, and wealthy; she will forget that she ever met the poor ex-bootblack."

The youth went off for a long walk, and he carried a heavy heart in his bosom. Never until that moment had he realized what an impression the girl had made upon his mind. He was past eighteen, and Myra was fifteen, but she was a very matured girl for her years. Men may form great ambitions, but there are few who can maintain their ambitions against the pleadings of a lovely face, and we are compelled to confess that at the last moment Tom discovered that he was madly and hopelessly in love. And there are youths who at the age of eighteen can become as madly and sincerely smitten as those of maturer years.

Poor Weir! A sadder being at that time did not exist upon the face of the earth, and knowing he was unobserved he madly beat the air with his extended arms, and muttered and raved in a very dramatic manner, when suddenly he heard his name called. He looked up, and lo! there stood the beautiful girl that had caused all his wild gesticulations.

"How do you do, Mr. Weir?"

"How do you do?" returned Tom, in a mechanically polite manner.

"Are you practicing for some amateur theatricals, or have you determined to become a real actor?"

Tom looked at the lovely girl in a reproachful manner, and handsome he looked as he did so. Those elegant eyes that flashed from and illumined his face never looked more beautiful than at that moment, and there was sad reproach in his tone as he said:

"I suppose an ex-bootblack can not look higher than becoming in the near future a theatrical star?"

"Here, here! What do you mean?"

"Yes, yes; I know what I mean, and what you meant."

"Mr. Weir," said the girl, "I am sorry for what I said; but you must be extremely sensitive to place such an interpretation upon my bantering words. I had not the remotest idea of hurting your feelings or making any sinister suggestions."

"Forgive me, Miss Hubbard. I will admit I am oversensitive." And, changing the subject, Tom added: "It is rumored you are going to New York to reside."

"Yes."

"Will your father make New York his permanent home?"

"Yes; I do not believe we will ever return—except to visit."

"Are you pleased to leave the old town where you were born?"

"I am pleased—yes; but I do not feel good at breaking up old associations. But I shall be glad to live in great New York."

"You have been to New York?"

"Yes, once or twice."

"And you think you will like to live in New York?"



"Yes, I shall be delighted to live there. Although I was born in the country, I have always pined for city life."

"Will you not return here to school?"

"No; I shall attend an academy in New York."

"And, upon the whole, you are pleased to go?"

"Yes."

"Then I must be glad, for your sake."

"Thank you. But, Mr. Weir, I desire to ask you a question."

"I shall be glad to answer any question you may ask."

"Why did Ralph Rolando leave the seminary?"

Tom blushed and stammered, and the clear, sharp eyes of the girl were fixed upon him.

"How should I know?" at last Tom sputtered out.

"I am not asking you how you should know; I am asking you if you do know."

"I suppose," said Tom, "that it was owing to his illness."

"Did you warn him to leave the town?"

Tom gazed in amazement, and for a moment did not answer.

"Will you answer me?"

"Do not press that question."

"If your answer would not be yes, if spoken, you would answer me readily."

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"And do you want me to answer you?"

"I do."

Tom was a proud fellow, and he was not just himself at that moment, and he said:

"Why do you ask me that question?"

"I will tell you after you have answered it."

"And do you really desire that I should answer the question?"

"I do."

"I am sorry; do not press it."

"Yes; I want your answer."

"The day may come when you will regret ever having forced an answer from me."

"Your remark is strange; but I still press the question."

"I did warn Ralph Rolando to leave the town."

"And did you threaten him if he did not leave the town?"

Tom was in a desperate mood. A certain suspicion had risen in his mind, and regardless of all consequences, and with a determination to make no explanations, he answered, in a severe tone:

"I did threaten him."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

THERE came a troubled look to Myra's beautiful face as she said:

"And did you commit an assault upon him? Did you throw him into the creek?"

"Yes, I did," came the answer, in a sturdy tone.

The troubled look deepened upon Myra's face, and in really anxious tones she asked:

"Why did you throw him into the creek? and why did you threaten him and drive him away from the town?"

"I have no explanations to offer."

"You will tell me why you threatened him?"

"I will not."

Tom spoke in a tone of strong determination. A certain suspicion flashed through the youth's mind and made him very angry. He placed a certain interpretation upon Myra's questions and a deeper meaning upon the anxiety so vividly expressed upon her beautiful face.

"Please tell me," she pleaded.

"Excuse me, Miss Hubbard, but my reasons do not concern you—they can not interest you."

"They do concern me and interest me more than you can understand."

"I am sorry."

"Why?"

"Because I can make no explanations."

"But you will."

"I will not."

Tom spoke in an irritated tone, and the fair girl still urged:

"Oh, yes, you will tell me."

"I will not."

"You absolutely refuse?"

"I do."

"Please reconsider your determination."

"I will make no explanations."

"Do you know his life was in peril?"

"How?"

"He came very near having pneumonia."

"So it was said, but I do not believe it."

"It is true."

"How do you know?"

"I will be more frank than you have been: I asked the doctor."

"And he told you Rolando's life was in peril?"

"Yes."

"You appear to have great interest in the matter?"

"I did have."

"Your anxiety is over now, and I am glad for your sake."

"Thank you, but my anxiety is not over."

"You fear I may still pursue him?"

"Yes."

"You need have no fear."

"Did you not threaten to do so?"

"No."

"Please tell me why you threw him into the creek and why you threatened him and caused him to leave town?"

"I will not."

There came a harder look to Myra's lovely face.

"Your refusal leads me to suspect the worst."

"You may suspect what you choose."

Tom had become really angry, and he spoke in a defiant tone.

"Mr. Weir, we may never meet again."

"You will be consoled," said Tom.

Myra did not discern the meaning of our aggravated hero's remark, and she said:

"I did wish to hold you in better estimation."

"May I ask you one question?"

"Certainly."

"How did you learn I threatened him?"

"The doctor told me."

"And the doctor told you I threw him into the creek?"

"Yes."

"The doctor has told you so much he may tell you why I did so."

"He did."

"Will you tell me the reasons he gave for my violence?"

"I can not."

"No? You refuse to tell me the real facts."

"I can tell you no more."

"How did the doctor chance to tell you anything?"

"It was not through chance."

"You asked him?"

"I did."

"Well, miss, it was all an unfortunate affair."

"Then I was sure you would tell me all."

"I shall tell you nothing."

"You still refuse?"

"I do."

"Then I shall, as I said, be at liberty to form my own conclusions."

"Certainly."

"I am sorry, Mr. Weir. I met you on purpose to afford you an opportunity to clear yourself; but I must now conclude that you can not."

"No, I can not. I did throw him in the creek, and I did threaten him if he did not leave town."

"I am disappointed. I thought—"

Myra did not complete the sentence.

"What did you think?" asked Tom.

"It does not matter. I will bid you good-day."

The girl started and walked away. We will here say it was very unfortunate that she did not complete the sentence she commenced; had she done so the chances are explanations might have followed.

Tom stood and watched her graceful form as she walked away along the road, and he said:

"Ah, I am but a bootblack after all. So the world goes. I see it all—even that beautiful girl is designing and deceitful. She merely used me as a foil to play off on that fellow Rolando. Her attentions at the dance were a fraud. So let it be—possibly it is as well. My eyes are opened now. I have deceived myself, but I will dismiss all recollections of her from my mind forever. She has done me one service—I will never put faith in a female again as long as I live. From this moment my mind shall be set upon my career."

Tom did not see Miss Hubbard again during his school-days. A week or two following his talk with her on the road she left the town, and a sadness came to our hero's heart. He had said he would forget her. It was easy to say so, but he found it difficult to carry out his determination.

One day Hiram came into his room, and the latter said:

"Tom, there are hard stories about you going around."

"What are the stories?"

"They say you drove Ralph Rolando from town."

"So I did."

"Did you assail him?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did you waylay him?"

"No."

"Tell me all about it."

"I have nothing to say, Hiram."

"You can tell me."

"No; I can not."

"Why not?"

"I can tell no one."

"But you admit you assailed him?"

"I admit I threw him into the creek."

"Well, if you did, I'll bet all I can raise you had good reasons."

The idea flashed through Tom's mind: My friend believes in me; Miss Hubbard did not.

"Yes, Hiram, I had good reasons."

"If I were you I'd make the reasons public."

"I never will."

"It is admitted you will take the highest honors."

"I trust I will."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

WHEN Tom had entered the seminary he had taken a position in the highest classes, as he only intended to take a finishing course in order to enter college, and he had also taken additional lessons, and when Hiram alluded to his taking the highest honors he meant he would be the valedictorian.

"You will enter Yale?" said Hiram.

"No."

"I thought you intended to enter Yale."

"No; I shall enter another college."

"It is said Rolando will enter Yale."

"So I have heard."

"Ah! I see why you have changed your mind."

The graduation-day arrived, and Tom, as had been predicted, did take the highest honors, and acquitted himself well. The time later on approached when he was to leave the town, and the day preceding his departure he called upon the president of the seminary, and the two held a long talk, and Tom heard how deep was the prejudice against him, as it appeared to be generally believed that he had done a great wrong to Ralph Rolando.

Tom, upon leaving the school, went direct to New York, and from there proceeded up to the country and visited his guardian, and, after a short visit, returned to New York.

Our hero's means were very limited, and he took board in a very cheap pension, and one day he went to walk in the park. He was crossing one of the roads when he heard a shout. He was warned just in time to avoid being run over. He leaped out of the way and looked up, and a sight met his gaze that filled his soul with bitterness. An elegant equipage dashed by, but he had time to recognize the occupants of the vehicle, and his glance rested upon his bitter foe, Ralph Rolando, and beside the latter, all smiles and pleasure, sat Myra Hubbard.

"It is as I thought," muttered Tom, as he gained the foot-walk and started along through the shrub-bordered path.

Indeed it was Myra and Ralph who occupied the carriage, and both had recognized our hero as the driver yelled to the former to "look out!"

"It is that fellow Weir," said Rolando.

A shadow had settled on Myra's beautiful face. She had recognized Tom.

"By George! I wonder if that fellow has come on here to murder me? What a vindictive rascal he is! and I never did that fellow any harm in my life."

"I think his being here is only accidental," said Myra.

"I wish I could think so; but let him beware! I do not fear him. I have been very patient with him; but let him beware! I will be ready for him if he assails me again."

"I do not believe he will assail you."

"Ah! you do not know what a low-bred rascal he is! I never told you one half of that fellow's insults to me, especially after you had honored him so that night of the german."

"He is a strange, morbid fellow; but I can not believe he is really vindictive."

"You would think him vindictive if I were to tell you of his assault upon me."



"Did he really assault you?"  
 "I am half inclined to tell you all the facts."  
 "Tell me the facts."  
 "One night I was walking along the road and I came by a stone wall when suddenly I heard a report and a pistol ball whistled over my head."

Myra turned deathly pale.  
 "Did he really seek to murder you?"  
 "Yes, he did."  
 "And why did you not have him arrested?"  
 "I pitied him."  
 "I do not think you were justified in pitying an assassin."

"I had no witnesses; it would have been a terrible charge, and I could not prove it."  
 "But you should have exposed him."  
 "I had not the heart."  
 "But now, you see, he may yet carry out his design against you."  
 "No; he dare not."  
 "It is terrible to think how he pursues you. Do you know I once thought him a very noble fellow?"

"I did at first, and now I must do myself justice. You thought for a long time that I was unjust to him, and indulged a vile prejudice against him; but Nelson Ward could tell you facts that would astonish you. I did try at first to cultivate the fellow's good will, but he hated me from the start, and after he had made your acquaintance he seemed to hate me even more intensely, and three times he actually attempted to take my life!"

"I did not dream it had gone so far."  
 "Oh, he is a terrible fellow!"  
 "You will avoid him, Mr. Rolando?"  
 "Certainly, I shall; but you need not fear, he will never do me any harm."  
 "Do you really think he came purposely in your way to-day?"  
 "I can hardly think so; but it is possible."  
 "We came very near running over him."  
 "I reckon that was all a little game. He was on the alert."

The ride was completed, and Myra returned to her home; and the last words she said to Rolando, when he assisted her up the steps of her father's elegant mansion, were:

"You will avoid that fellow?"  
 "Oh! certainly; but you need not fear; I will be prepared for him."  
 "I can not think he really intended to meet us to-day."  
 "We will wait and see whether we meet him again."

Myra, later on in her own room, sat down to think over the incidents of the day, and she kept repeating:

"Can it be true that this Weir really sought to murder Rolando? I can not believe it possible, and yet he did admit to me that he had thrown his school-mate into the river and had threatened him."

Tom, meantime, returned to his humble room and spent hours in thinking over the incident of the meeting, and he muttered:

"Hang it! I wish I had not seen her; but how I was deceived! I see it all now. I was a fool, and she has persuaded her father to live in New York so she can be near that fellow; and she is happy now. Well, well, it is strange and sad, for when she becomes his wife, as she will some of these days, she will be the wife of a villain. He will love her in his way for awhile, and then—well, well, he will make her life a hell."

#### CHAPTER XLIX.

THREE months passed and Tom entered college. He did not again see Myra or meet Rolando during his stay in New York.

At college our hero set himself to study. A great ambition swelled in his heart, and he devoted every hour to study. He did not join the college ball team nor boat crew, but he did keep up constant exercise. The bulk of his time was devoted to study. He not only kept up with the regular studies of the college, but, as at the seminary, took additional lessons. He had a natural aptitude for the study of languages, and became a great linguist; and besides, he found time for practice in manly accomplishments. He became a fine horseman, swordsman, and pistol-shot. He was determined to make himself a very accomplished man in every direction—and he succeeded, and became, as it were, a veritable Monte-Cristo in all but the possession of that extraordinary fellow's great wealth.

At last came graduation-day, and Tom car-

ried off all the college honors, as he had carried them at the seminary.

Once during his college career he had seen Rolando. His enemy was a student at another college, and had become a member of the ball team. Indeed, he was famous as a college-team pitcher, and also as a general athlete.

Tom went one day to see a match, and saw Rolando in the box as pitcher, and at the moment a strange fancy entered our hero's mind.

The game ended in a victory for Rolando's team, and the credit for the victory was accorded to the pitcher. After the game our hero watched his chance, and after the visiting nine had donned their citizens' dress he found an opportunity to speak to Rolando. He advanced and touched his old-time foe on the shoulder. Rolando turned and recognized Tom at a glance, but did not seem to do so, and said:

"Well, fellow, what do you want?"  
 "You recognize me?"  
 "Who are you?"  
 "Nonsense! you recognize me well enough."  
 "Will you tell me your name?"  
 Tom involuntarily said:  
 "My name is Tom Weir."  
 "I do not recollect you, my good fellow."  
 "I'd like to speak a word with you."  
 "Go ahead!"

While Tom was talking Rolando was taking his measure with his eyes. The Cuban had developed into a great strong lusty fellow. He was taller than Tom by an inch, and his stature was larger and seemingly stronger by far.

"We have not met for years."  
 "I do not remember ever having met you."  
 "That is not true. But listen: I do not desire to claim your acquaintance, and I will never address you again, but I do wish to speak a few words."

"Go ahead!"  
 "I wish that you would shake hands with me and promise to forget all that occurred in the past, as I will forget the same."

"My dear fellow, I am perfectly willing to forget. I had already forgotten that we had ever met."  
 "We may meet again, but it will be a truce between us."

"As far as I am concerned you need have no fear; but I do not know why you think we may meet."

"I shall reside in New York."  
 Rolando laughed in a satirical manner, and asked:

"Do you not think New York is large enough for you and I? Do you want the earth?"

"One word: the day may come when you will recall this scene; then you will remember my words: You have done me a great wrong."

"I have done you a great wrong?"  
 "Yes."

"You are crazy, I fear."

"I am not crazy, and you know it. I will never cross your path, and I only ask you not to cross mine. All I ask is that if we ever meet we shall be strangers, and that in return for my silence you will be silent also."

"You are talking in riddles to me."  
 "All right. I have done my duty, and more. I have but one more word to say: it will be better for you if you heed my words."

"My dear fellow, you need have no fear. I shall forget again, as I have for years, that you are in existence. Good-bye to you."

Rolando walked off, and Tom retired to his room.

As intimated in the preceding chapter, our hero carried off all the honors, and in good time returned to New York, and entered into a law office.

Rolando did not graduate until one year later, and he, too, retired to New York, and the day of his return was an eventful one to him, as upon that day he received a revelation that caused his blood to run cold.

Tom had never met Myra since the day of the carriage incident in the park, but he often heard of her. She had become a reigning belle. She was acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful young ladies in New York, where there are so many beautiful girls, and besides, it was known that she was a great heiress. Her father's wealth was computed at millions.

One night Tom, who was very fond of music, went to the opera. His means were limited, and he secured a seat in the family circle, and being an old-time New Yorker he was well enough posted to go early in order to secure a front seat. He had been in the theater some time, when just as the curtain rose a gay party entered one of the boxes, and Tom's heart stood still and

his eyes became riveted upon one of the party that had just entered.

#### CHAPTER L.

WONDROUSLY beautiful was the fair girl upon whose face our hero's eyes were fixed, and that wondrously beautiful girl was none other than Myra Hubbard.

Tom had hoped and believed that he had driven the image of that fair girl from his memory forever as a disturbing element, but as his glance fell upon her there came to him a wild longing—indeed, a rush of feeling such as he had never before experienced in all his life.

He sat like one dazed for an instant, so great was the rush of feeling. He seemed to look through a veil—the sudden attack upon his nervous system temporarily blinded him—and when his vision cleared he became conscious that he was madly, wildly in love—ay, so madly in love that it had become a question of possession or death.

Our hero was a remarkably handsome fellow; indeed, he could safely be pronounced one of the handsomest men in New York, and he possessed powers of fascination if he desired to exert them that few women could withstand; and besides, he was splendidly educated and accomplished in other directions.

Myra was truly a beautiful girl, and as the conviction forced itself upon our hero's mind that all that beauty was destined for Ralph Rolando, bitterness filled his heart.

A few moments and Tom recovered his calmness, and he sat and watched every movement of the beautiful girl; and as he watched, many strange, wild thoughts floated through his mind.

The opera proceeded, but Tom paid but little attention to the incidents presented upon the stage; his gaze was riveted upon Myra. One fact pleased him: Ralph Rolando was not one of the party, and Tom muttered:

"If she should love and marry any one but that murderous scoundrel, I would not say one word—I'd be resigned; but to think of such youth and loveliness becoming the prey—yes, the prey of that cold-blooded villain—"

Tom gazed and gazed, and suddenly one of those commonplace incidents occurred that oftentimes result in the end in very serious consequences. Myra, during an interval when the curtain was down, raised her opera-glass to her eyes and swept with a glance the upper gallery. Suddenly her glance appeared to become fixed, and our hero knew that he had been seen and recognized. He looked away, tried to look indifferent and unconcerned; but he knew that his features under the powerful glass were fully revealed.

At length the glance was withdrawn, and it became Tom's turn. He looked, and lo! a change had come over the face of the lovely girl; the smile had disappeared; a pallor supplemented the roses, and there came also a sad and troubled look.

"Great guns! what does that mean?" was the mental query presented to our hero's mind; and then there came a bitter and very aggravating solution, and he muttered: "She fears for Rolando. Well, well, for her sake, I'll not harm him."

Tom left the theater after awhile. He could not bear to sit there and gaze upon her to whom he could not speak; but as he rose to depart he stole one more glance, and saw that the glass was again leveled upon him.

"You need not fear, beautiful mademoiselle," he muttered.

A long time passed and Tom did not see Myra again, but every waking moment of his life her image was present to his mind.

Our hero, as has been stated, had entered a law office, and he was devoting himself to study as assiduously as he had done when a student in the seminary and the college.

As has been intimated, Ralph Rolando finished his college course and returned to New York; and, as stated, the day following his return to the city he received a startling announcement.

The senior Rolando was the head partner in a large concern doing business with South America, and also with the West Indian Islands. He was supposed to be a very wealthy man, and lived not only in a magnificent residence, but supported a grand style.

Ralph was an only son, but he had two sisters who were very brilliant young ladies.

On the morning following his return from college Ralph's father summoned him into the library. There was a sad look upon the elder



Rolando's face, but the son was not prepared for the question that greeted him.

"My son, I have called you here to talk with you about your future. What profession have you elected to pursue?"

"Profession, sir!" exclaimed Ralph.

"Yes."

"I have not thought of becoming a professional man, sir."

"What were your desires?"

"I supposed, as a matter of course, I would some day succeed you in your business as head of the firm."

"That was your idea?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will never succeed me in business."

"Have I offended you, sir, in any way?"

"No."

"Did you not once speak as though I were to succeed you?"

"I did."

"And why have you changed your mind?"

"We will talk about that later on. Let me ask you a question. Have you been paying attention to Miss Hubbard, the beautiful heiress?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you engaged to her?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever had even an explicit understanding with that young lady?"

"Why do you ask me these questions, sir?"

"I have a most excellent reason in your interests. Do you think you can win her?"

"It is strange, sir, you should talk in this way?"

"You think it is strange?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know she is an only child?"

"Yes, sir."

"That her father is a millionaire several times?"

"So it is said, sir."

"And you think I am a millionaire?"

"I have always supposed, sir, you were a very rich man."

"I am believed to be a very rich man, Ralph, but the time has come when I must reveal to you the real truth."

Ralph turned deathly pale, and a terrible suspicion flashed through his mind.

"Yes, my son, I am about to reveal to you in confidence a startling fact. I am not really worth one cent."

"Father!" ejaculated the young man, his face assuming a ghastly hue.

"It is true, my son."

"I do not understand it, sir; you are merely trying me."

"I know I am trying you, for it is very trying to me to make the announcement, but the time has arrived when it must be made. Yes, Ralph, what I have told you is absolutely true."

## CHAPTER LI.

THERE followed a moment's silence, and then in a husky voice Ralph asked:

"Father, can this be true?"

"It is true, my son."

"I do not understand it, sir."

"I will explain. Our firm has met with losses in every direction. We are to-day insolvent, but our credit is good. We are running along and dividing between us, for living expenses, other people's money. Some day the crash will come. I am too old to recover."

"But can I not take hold of the business and save it?"

"How can you?"

"Your estates in Cuba—"

"Yes."

"Mortgage them."

"My boy, they were mortgaged years ago. Not a dollar can be raised on them. Indeed, they do not belong to me now. The party holding the mortgage can foreclose and take the title any day he may choose."

"And there is no hope?"

"No hope, my son. We are hopelessly behindhand; we can not recover."

"My sisters?"

"Fortunately, both are to be married shortly and will be provided for; but you will have to go to a profession or marry an heiress, and you must act quickly, for at any moment the crash may come. Now tell me, what are your chances with Miss Hubbard? Were you to marry her, you might raise capital and save the business; but it would require at least half a million, and then there might be a chance once again to make money. Now, what are your chances?"

"Father, I do not know."

"You have been visiting her for years?"

"Yes."

"She always appeared to show a preference for your society?"

"Ah! you do not understand."

"Have you been proving a faint-hearted lover?"

"No, sir."

"What is the matter?"

"I do not know her feelings."

"You do not know her feelings?"

"No, sir."

"This is very strange. Are you a born fool?"

"No, sir."

"Then will you explain?"

"I can not understand her, sir."

"Can not understand her?"

"No, sir."

"Tell me all about it."

"During all these years that I have been madly in love with her I have not been able to gain one indication that she loves me."

"You had better find out."

"I have sought to find out."

"Have you ever told her of your love?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are a fool!"

"No, sir, I am not. You can not fully understand."

"Understand what, my son?"

"What a peculiar person Miss-Hubbard really is."

"Ah! Do you suppose she would accept your attentions all these years if she did not love you; and do you know it is generally supposed that you two are engaged and that she is only waiting your return from college to announce the engagement?"

"I know this, sir, and the last time I saw her she gave me a hint."

"She gave you a hint?"

"Yes, sir."

"What hint?"

"I asked to write to her."

"Well?"

"She forbid me."

"And did you mind the prohibition?"

"No, sir."

"You did write to her?"

"I did."

"Well?"

"My letter was returned."

"Your letter was returned?"

"Yes."

"That is a strange incident."

"Yes, sir; but I have an idea."

"What is your idea?"

"That she does not care a fig for me."

"Then why does she encourage your attentions?"

"She only tolerates them for old acquaintance's sake."

"Then, frankly, you have no hopes in that direction?"

"I have not given up all hope—no, sir."

"Why not bring matters to a crisis?"

"I shall, sir."

"You had better do so."

"Yes, sir. You will find I am not a fool. She shall marry me!"

"But suppose she refuses?"

"She shall marry me, all the same."

"I do not understand you."

"I claim she has given me encouragement."

"Well?"

"I shall demand that she become my wife."

"Well?"

"If she refuses I will make her my wife."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I will not tell you how; but I will say that Miss Hubbard shall become Mrs. Rolando."

There was a glitter in the fellow's eyes as he spoke.

"Well," said the father, "you know what your prospects are?"

"I do."

"Act then. I have nothing more to say; but remember, there is no hope from our side as far as the business is concerned. You are still looked upon as the heir of a millionaire, but you are the son of a ruined man. Make quick use of the present misapprehension, for neither of us knows at what moment the crash of exposure may come."

Ralph left the presence of his father lost in deep thought. That same afternoon he called at the residence of Mr. Hubbard, but Myra was not at home. Two days followed and he had not seen her. On the evening of the third day he met her at a grand cotillon party. He went

forward and was coldly received, and bitterness glowed in his heart. He was determined, however, not to be dropped so easily. He could bide his time.

He turned to walk back to the room reserved for the gentlemen, when he suddenly came face to face with Tom Weir.

The two young gentlemen passed each other without any signs of recognition; but as Rolando walked on and started to pace the room, he muttered:

"I wonder what that means? Where did that fellow come from? Why is he here?"

Later on Rolando met Myra, and he offered her his arm and requested a promenade.

Myra accepted his arm. She had a purpose, as will be revealed as our story progresses. As the two passed from the crowd of revelers, Ralph said:

"At last, Myra, I have the pleasure of speaking to you alone."

## CHAPTER LII.

MYRA laughed in an easy tone, and said:

"Did you really desire to speak to me alone?"

"Do I not always desire to speak to you—are you not constantly in my thoughts?"

"Am I?"

"You are."

"Well, how polite and complimentary you are!"

"It is not politeness nor is it complimentary. Myra, you must understand the truth—you have understood it all these years. I have completed my college course, and now we must come to a formal understanding."

"Why, certainly, we should come to a formal understanding."

Ralph did not like Myra's tone: it was too cold and flippant. She did not appear at all excited or even angry or apprehensive, but she was as indifferent as though merely joking with a child.

"Myra, I love you."

"You do?"

"You know I do."

"Have not you got over that boyish fancy yet?"

"Do you call it a boyish fancy?"

"Why, certainly!"

"If it was a boyish fancy it has become a man's madness."

"Indeed?"

"Myra, you must put aside this indifferent manner."

"Shall I?"

"You must."

"Well?"

"Do you not understand?"

"No."

"I love you madly!"

"Do you?"

"You know I do. Why trifle with me? Dear, good girl, have you not made me suffer long enough?"

"Do you really suffer?"

"I do."

"I am sorry."

"Then tell me the truth."

"Tell you the truth?"

"Yes, and cease trifling."

"What will you consider the truth?"

"I love you."

"So you said."

"I love you madly! I ask you to become my wife!"

"I can not become your wife. It's all nonsense."

There came the old-time glitter to Rolando's eyes.

"All nonsense?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"You need no answer from me."

"I need no answer from you?"

"No."

"I have asked you to become my wife."

"You knew what my answer would be unless you are an idiot!"

Ralph's face became ghastly in its paleness.

"I knew what your answer would be?"

"Yes."

"How am I to interpret your words?"

For one brief instant a great wild thrill of fury surged through the man's heart.

"I do not see how you can misinterpret them."

"Do you love me, Myra?"

"Love you?"

"Yes, love me; and will you become my wife?"



"I do not love you; I can not become your wife."

"You are not in earnest; you are merely tantalizing me?"

"Nonsense, Mr. Rolando! you know I never loved you and I never gave you any reason to suppose that I did love you."

"And I have loved you all these years."

"You were very dumb if you have really loved me, and you had better forget your foolish notion as soon as possible."

"Forget my foolish notion?"

"Yes."

"Are you really in earnest?"

"I am."

"It can not be possible."

"Mr. Rolando, how ridiculous! You know that I have never loved you. I have received you as a friend for old-time acquaintance's sake. I do not feel sorry for you, for you have known this all these years; otherwise you would not have waited until now to perpetrate this joke."

"Joke, Miss Hubbard?"

"Yes, under all the circumstances, I can not look upon your present proposition as anything else but a joke."

"And are you in earnest?"

"If you are I am."

The glitter came again and the pallor, and Rolando said, in a husky voice:

"Your treatment of me is cruel."

"Cruel?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"If you are not blind and forgetful you know how."

"I am not blind nor forgetful."

"All these years—"

"Well, what of all these years?"

"You have given me encouragement."

"I have, sir?"

"Yes, you have."

"Mr. Rolando, I thought I could laugh you out of this foolishness, but now you compel me to speak seriously."

"Yes, speak seriously."

"I have never given you the least encouragement ever since I have known you, and you know it. I have only tolerated you, and you know it. My conduct to-night is no surprise to you; you did not expect any other answer."

"And you do not love me?"

"I do not."

"And you never loved me?"

"I never did."

"And you refuse to become my wife?"

"I would never think for one moment of becoming your wife."

"And you are speaking seriously?"

"I am."

"I understand it all, Miss Hubbard; and now listen to me: you did love me once."

"Did I?"

"You did."

"When?"

"I will tell you. You loved me until that footblack came to —, and from that moment there was a change in your feelings toward me. You transferred your love to that assassin."

There came a glitter to Myra's eyes as she said:

"Only our long acquaintance permits you to talk to me in this manner."

"I have a right to talk to you in this manner, and I am telling you the truth."

"All that you say is nonsense."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"Then how is it that fellow is here to-night?"

## CHAPTER LIII.

MYRA gave a start, and in a husky voice demanded:

"What do you mean?"

The beautiful girl did not intend to betray any emotion—it came involuntarily. The announcement of Rolando was a great surprise to her.

Rolando upon beholding her emotion said:

"Aha! I see it all, you have been carrying on a secret affair with this fellow."

Myra started back; her eyes flashed, her bosom heaved, and her whole form quivered as she exclaimed:

"You dastard, how dare you thus insult me?"

"Insult you, Myra?" repeated Rolando.

"The insult is a cowardly one. And now, sir, hear me: I have tolerated you because when we were boy and girl I knew you as a friend; but from this hour forward we are strangers!

Do not address me ever again as long as you live!"

"Excuse me, Myra, I was wrong; I know the charge is false."

Myra started to move away. Rolando seized her arm and cried:

"You shall not go until you forgive me!"

"Unhand me, sir!"

"Forgive me?"

"Will you release me?"

"Myra, you must forgive me!"

"Never! I believe you are a sneak! I hold sneaks in utter contempt!"

There came a terrible look in Rolando's malignant eyes, and he said:

"Wait: I cease to plead. I demand now that you listen to me!"

"You demand that I listen to you?"

"I do. You shall not throw me over in this way. You shall not drop me after encouraging me all these years. You virtually promised to love me and become my wife years ago. You have permitted me to go on loving you. You have been my day-star all these years. I have studied and hoped, and only looked forward to the time when you should redeem your promise!"

Myra did not attempt to flee away. She allowed herself to be drawn back into the little anteroom which the two had occupied alone. There was determination in her glance, resolution in her manner, and she said:

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

"Dare you say that I ever gave you encouragement?"

"It is true."

"Dare you say that I ever confessed to loving you?"

"Not in so many words, but by every other token. Yes, you led me on to love you, and gave me every reason to believe that I was loved in return. I am not a fool, and if you were merely coquetting it is your own fault. I shall hold you to your promise."

"My promise?"

"Yes, your promise."

"What promise did I ever make to you?"

"You promised to become my wife."

"I promised to become your wife?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"During many years. You did not promise in so many words; your promise was but a tact intimation, but binding enough."

"Mr. Rolando, can it be possible you have so deceived yourself?"

"I have not deceived myself; I am not a fool; and if you have met some one who has taken your fancy for the time being you shall not throw me over in this manner."

There followed a moment's silence, and Myra appeared lost in deep thought, and at length in a changed tone she said:

"Mr. Rolando, if you have made a sad mistake I pity you and excuse your conduct; but if you are seeking to make appear that which is not true I shall learn to detest you."

"I have made no mistake, and you know it."

"And you deliberately charge me with deceiving you?"

"I deliberately charge that you have encouraged me to love you and led me to hope that you loved me in return, and held out to me every possible index that you would become my wife."

"If you really do love me, your love has maddened and blinded you. Listen: I never loved you, and from the very first moment I met you I deliberately set to make it appear to you that I did not—that I could not—love you."

"Oh, how well you play your part now!"

"I will permit your insults to pass at this moment, but you shall never have the chance to insult me again."

"Myra, you shall become my wife; yes; I will not thus, at one fell blow, permit the hopes of my life to be dashed to atoms! No, no; you did love me, and you taught me to love you, and you shall become my wife."

"I shall become your wife?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean—do you threaten me?"

"You force me to threaten you."

"I force you to threaten me?"

"Yes; by your cruel conduct you force me to threaten you."

"And if I refuse to become your wife, what will you do?"

"You will not refuse to become my wife; you are but trying me. You always were fond of these cruel jokes."

"I am not joking."

"It makes no difference; you may be momentarily dazzled by another, but no one shall win you away from me."

"No one can win me away from you because I never was in any way pledged to you, and I tell you now I will not become your wife. I am beginning to despise you. I never even admired you. I was particular only to hide from you that you were distasteful to me. I merely tolerated you, and took particular care not to encourage you."

"You shall become my wife."

"Never!"

"Do not drive me to desperation."

"I do not care how desperate you may become; and you may drive me to make a declaration you will not like."

"I care not what declarations you may make, you shall become my wife."

"Never!"

"We shall see."

"And you persist?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then hear me: I am now convinced that this is a deliberate attempt on your part to make it appear that I did encourage you. I believe you have deliberately decided as a last desperate resource to make this accusation, but it will fail; you can not intimidate me into becoming the wife of a man whom I now despise!"

"You dare say you despise me?"

"I say more: I always had to struggle against a sentiment of detestation, and now I do detest you!"

"I did not think, Myra, you would dare go so far."

"No, you thought you could intimidate me, but you are sadly mistaken, and you have yet to learn how impossible it will be for you to intimidate me."

"I see; you wish to dare all the consequences rather than make good your promise."

## CHAPTER LIV.

It is impossible to describe the changing expressions that passed over Myra's lovely face. She was a wonderfully bright girl, however. At first she had been surprised, and for a moment did believe that the man was sincere, but later on she came to perceive that the fellow was deliberately set to take advantage of their acquaintance to make it appear that he was deceived. Then she thought it was all a bold trick, and she became as indignant as the boldness of his scheme demanded.

"Consequences!" she repeated, in answer to the man's declaration as recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, "what do you mean when you threaten consequences? I suppose you will tell me that you will plunge into the river, and all that nonsense!"

"I will tell you nothing of the kind. I am not such a fool! I will not kill myself for a heartless and deceitful woman! No, no! but I will make you feel the consequences of your deceit and treachery all the same!"

"As this is the last time we will ever converse, I will let pass your insulting remarks and charges, and I will merely, as a matter of curiosity, take what consequences I have to bear."

"I will proclaim your treachery to the world. I will let those know, who now think you a pure woman, that you are really a false, designing coquette."

Myra laughed, and said, in a taunting tone:

"Do you think that will harm me, coming from you?"

"I will follow you as long as you live! I will haunt you the world over! You have ruined my happiness—I will be a shadow upon yours!"

"And do you think you can coerce me by these threats?"

"We shall see. The day will come when you will regret having fooled and deceived one who loved as madly as I have loved you. Yes, Myra, I love you as man never loved woman before!"

"You do?"

Myra spoke in an aggravating tone and with satirical emphasis.

"Yes, I do. And listen: become my wife, as you have promised—yes, as you have promised—and I will devote myself to your happiness—I can and will make you happy; carry out your treachery, and I will devote my life to vengeance!"

"I'd rather trust your vengeance than your love. This is not the age for such heroics. You are a mean, contemptible poltroon! And now,



Mr. hear my words: I despise you and defy you, and if you dare say aught against me I will publicly horsewhip you! I will follow you, instead of you following me; I will proclaim you, instead of you proclaiming me; I will drive you from respectable circles, and force you to take refuge among the bullies of whom you are one! Remember, I am a Yankee girl, and I have a Yankee girl's grit! The idea of such a miserable fellow as you daring to threaten me because I merely, against my inclination, permitted you to appear as an acquaintance! But from this hour you cease to be even an acquaintance!"

The man listened in amazement. His face assumed a ghastly hue. He had not expected to be met in such a spirit. He had thought to at least frighten Myra; indeed, his whole conduct was part of the game. Failing all else the scoundrel desired to establish a claim that would at least force her father to a monetary settlement. He even was as mean as to think of such a scheme, and here he was met by defiance. His threats were confronted with counter-threats. She did not appear to fear him at all. He did not think he would declare his threats so soon, but she had forced them from his lips, and then she had defied him.

There followed a moment's silence. The two stood gazing into each other's eyes, and at that moment, by a strange and singular coincidence, Tom Weir entered the room.

He had been lost in deep thought, and had not observed the presence of others in the room, until he had crossed the threshold. He at once started to withdraw, when Myra exclaimed:

"Why, Mr. Weir, are you here? How glad I am to see you!"

The recognition and cordial greeting took our hero's breath away. He stood amazed and dazed, and at this moment Rolando's nerve came to his rescue.

He had not noticed our hero by the way of a greeting, but he did step forward and offer his arm to Myra, saying:

"I will escort you back to the parlor."

"I beg your pardon and thank you, but I have not seen Mr. Weir for years, and I shall ask him to give me his arm."

Tom extended his arm instantly, and seizing it, Myra said:

"Come, we will go," and turning to Rolando, she added:

"Good-night, Mr. Rolando."

The fellow sprang forward, and seizing hold of Myra, cried:

"Hold! Come what may, I will not force you ever for an instant to recognize this fellow. I will recall all I have said, but please let me save you from this humiliation."

"I beg your pardon; I prefer the escort of this gentleman; and mark my words, sir, I do not ask you to recall anything you have said. I shall enjoy being denounced by you—your denunciation will vindicate my past recognition of such a mean and contemptible person."

The last words were bitter, and they struck home and pierced the man to the heart, and he stood trembling with passion, and in a husky voice he said:

"I can not revenge myself upon you, Miss Hubbard, but this street-sweeper shall answer to me for his intrusion into this room."

Myra drew Tom away, and the moment she had escaped from Rolando's presence her courage failed her, and in a trembling tone she said:

"Mr. Weir, I shall ask a favor of you."

"I will be more than happy to have Miss Hubbard ask a favor of me."

"Will you accompany me to my home?"

"With pleasure; but the evening is not half over."

"I know it, but I must go; that man has grossly insulted me. He is a dangerous man, and I fear I invited him to wreak his vengeance upon you."

#### CHAPTER LV.

It is impossible to describe Tom's feelings at that moment. He was in heaven. It was a moment of delirious happiness. He could not bring himself to realize that it was not all a dream, the happiness had come upon him so suddenly and so unexpectedly. But he regained his nerve, and being a man of quick perception, he saw that something extraordinary had occurred, and decided that there was a reason for Myra's sudden condescension; and it came to him that there had been a lover's quarrel, and that he was being used as a foil. He was not loath to be so used; he was grateful for even one brief half

hour of bliss upon any conditions. He made no answer to Myra's immediate remarks, and she said:

"That man is a devil! He will wreak his vengeance upon you. I am sorry I invited the peril."

"Miss Hubbard," said Tom, "I do not know what has occurred; I hardly know what you mean; but one fact must be known to you: I do not fear Rolando. He has always been my enemy, and I have encountered his attempts at vengeance before."

Myra flashed a strange look upon our hero, and exclaimed:

"What is that you said?"

"I said I did not fear Rolando."

"You said more."

"Did I?"

"Yes."

"What did I say?"

Tom was seeking to withdraw from his declaration, which had been inadvertently made.

"You said you had encountered his attempts at vengeance before."

"Did I say that?"

"You did."

"I should not have made the remark."

"One moment, Mr. Weir—understand me: there never has existed between Mr. Rolando and myself one sentiment beyond what waits upon acquaintanceship."

There was no mistaking the intent of Myra's words. She was seeking to convey the information that she and Rolando were not lovers, and never had been; they were two very bright young people.

There followed an instant's silence, and Myra said:

"There may be much to explain between us as concerns this man, Mr. Weir. Will you call my carriage and be prepared to accompany me to my home?"

Myra left our hero, and the latter summoned the Hubbard carriage, and went to prepare himself to accompany her to her home. In the gentlemen's room he met Rolando face to face.

"Where are you going, sir?"

"Are you my keeper, sir, that I should report to you?"

"One moment, Tom Weir, I have just one word to say to you: I never liked you; we were never friends, but I always did respect you. Yes, you are an honorable fellow. I desire to make an appeal to you."

"Proceed, sir," said Tom, in a cold tone.

"I apologize for the epithet I used toward you."

"I have not asked you to recall any epithet you addressed to me."

"I know I was mad; and I acted meanly, but pity me!"

"Pity you, sir?"

"Yes."

"Please explain."

"Myra Hubbard and I am affianced. She is pledged to become my wife. There has arisen a misunderstanding between us. If she goes away to-night without an explanation, a great gulf will open up between us. Will you as a man and a gentleman permit me to escort her to her home?"

Tom stood an instant thinking. He was about to yield. He was, indeed, a noble-hearted and honorable fellow, but at that moment he recalled Myra's declaration. She had said in so many words, though not directly, that there was not and never had been an engagement existing between her and Rolando. The latter our hero knew to be a falsifier. He had every reason to believe that Myra was a truthful girl.

"You will grant my request?" said Rolando.

"I can not, sir."

"You refuse?"

"I do."

"And you claim to be a man of honor?"

"Mr. Rolando, you have made a false statement to me; had you not done so I might have yielded to your request."

"I have made a false statement to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"How?"

"You said that you were affianced to Miss Hubbard."

"It is true."

"The lady has made a statement to the contrary."

"She has?"

"Yes, sir; and since you have not told me the true facts, I can not yield."

"Miss Hubbard told you she had not promised to become my wife?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did she come to tell you that?"

"I can not submit to a cross-examination on that matter."

"You misunderstood her."

"No, sir, I did not."

"Let me explain and you will understand."

"Proceed."

"There did not exist a positive engagement; but she has led me on, and I have supposed until to-night that there was a tacit understanding."

Again our hero recalled Myra's words, otherwise he would have yielded, and he said:

"It is evident you have made a mistake, and Miss Hubbard does not desire your company. To-night she has asked me to accompany her."

"One moment. Tom Weir, you know me!"

"Yes, I have some knowledge of you."

"It appears to be your fate to come between me and the woman I love. This is not the first time you have crossed my path. Step aside, or, as we live, I will remove you forever!"

"Rolando, you know I do not care the snap of my finger for your threats! Stand aside yourself!"

#### CHAPTER LVI.

ROLANDO'S face was ghastly. His eyes glittered like those of an excited cobra; but Tom Weir was not a man to scare, and he moved away without another word, but he heard a bitter curse hissed after him.

Our hero found Myra waiting—she had been ready some time, and as Tom joined her he noticed that her face was deathly pale. Tom offered her his arm and as she clasped it a thrill of delight rushed through his veins. It was a moment of wild delirium—the happiest moment of his life.

As the two descended the stoop, Myra said:

"I am sorry I asked you to accompany me."

Tom's blood ran cold in an instant; the delightful tingle in his veins and the joyful throbbings of his heart ceased, and he said, in a cold, stern tone:

"Miss Hubbard, it is not too late to withdraw your invitation. I will place you in your carriage and say good-night."

"No; it is too late now. The mischief is done."

"You speak in riddles."

"I will explain."

"But you do not desire my company. Let me withdraw."

"No—no; you must go with me. I will explain."

"I will not demand an explanation. I will rest content with the brief honor of seeing you to your carriage."

They were at the carriage door, and, in a quick and imperious tone, Myra said:

"You must accompany me; I seek an explanation on my own account."

Tom assisted the lovely girl into the carriage, and following her, took a seat at her side.

"You kept me waiting, Mr. Weir."

"You will excuse me."

"Why did you do so?"

Tom laughed, and said:

"Do not compel me to answer."

"Yes, answer me."

"Then you compel me to confess my impetuousness?"

"I do."

"I met an acquaintance."

"A friend?"

Again Tom laughed, and said:

"Please excuse my having detained you, and do not press for an explanation."

"But I have promised you an explanation of a rude remark I made; your explanation must precede mine."

"It was merely an acquaintance I met."

"Not a friend?"

"No."

"An enemy?"

Tom did not answer, and Myra said:

"You met Mr. Rolando."

"Did I?"

"You did, and that is why I said I was sorry I had asked you to accompany me to my home."

"The meeting did not amount to anything. We merely exchanged a few words referring to old times."

"I fear I have made that man your enemy."

"Nonsense!"

"Tell me just what he said."

"I can not."

"Did he bind you to secrecy?"

"No."

"Then tell me what he said."



"Ah! he hardly knew what he said himself."  
 "He was angry because you were to accompany me home?"  
 "He would have preferred to have been your escort himself."  
 "And what did he say?"  
 "Oh, what he said does not amount to anything."  
 "As a friend I demand that you repeat to me exactly what passed."  
 "As a friend?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Can I really claim that you and I are friends?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Thank you."  
 "Now tell me."  
 "Do not press me."  
 "I do; and I have excellent reasons for pressing you to answer."  
 "He asked to be permitted to accompany you home."  
 "How could he do that when I had invited you?"  
 "Well, he desired the honor, and I do not blame him."  
 "He must have presented some claim to the honor. Tell me plainly what he said. You may as well do it, for I shall persist until you tell me all."  
 "He intimated that you and he were engaged."  
 "The villain! He dared to suggest a fact so false? Tell me all he said."  
 "Tom repeated the conversation that had occurred, word for word, and when he had finished, Myra said:  
 "Mr. Weir, there is not one word of truth in all he said. I have merely tolerated that man's presence; I never liked him, and I never found pleasure in his company. There is but one thing I regret. In asking you to accompany me home, I have reawakened his enmity toward you."  
 "Reawakened his enmity?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Is he my enemy?"  
 "You know he is your enemy, and I know it."

The carriage at that moment came to a halt in front of Miss Hubbard's palatial home.  
 "You must enter my home with me. This conversation must be continued. I have some questions to ask."  
 Tom accompanied Myra within her home, and a moment later they were sitting side by side in the grand parlor. Myra looked wondrously beautiful. She was excited, and her eyes gleamed with a preternatural brightness; her cheeks were flushed, and indeed she presented a glorious picture—yes, a ravishing one, in all her glorious beauty.  
 "Mr. Weir," she said, "some years ago, up in the town of —, just before I came to reside in New York, I met you during a walk."  
 "I remember. I will never forget any incident connected with you."  
 "That is a very handsome compliment, and if sincere I am very grateful."  
 "I mean just what I say."  
 "At the time alluded to I asked you a question."  
 "I remember."  
 "I asked you if you had threatened Ralph Rolando?"  
 "I remember."  
 "You said you had?"  
 "Yes."  
 "I asked you if you had warned him to leave the town?"  
 "Yes."  
 "I asked you if you had thrown him into the river?"  
 "Yes, I remember."  
 "You admitted that you had done so?"  
 "I did."  
 "Ever since that moment I have thought a great deal over that frank confession on your part."  
 Tom remained silent, and continuing, Myra said:  
 "It has since struck me as very strange that you should so frankly answer my questions and admit the grave accusations implied in them."  
 "I merely told you the truth."  
 "Yes, and it struck me as very strange that up to that moment I had never discovered anything that suggested such vindictiveness in your temperament."  
 "I am not a vindictive man."  
 "Then I remembered that Ralph Rolando was a spiteful fellow, and I remembered that he

hated you, and again it struck me as strange that you should appear as the really revengeful one of the two. Will you tell me now why you threatened him?"

#### CHAPTER LVII.

THERE followed a moment's silence, and strange, wild thoughts ran through our hero's mind; then there came a revulsion, and dark suspicions followed. He looked upon the lovely woman radiant in her rare beauty.

"Will you not answer, please?"  
 "Why do you ask me to do so?"  
 "I have a most excellent reason."  
 "Will you name your reason?"  
 "Do not ask me to do so; accept my plain statement, please."

"I can not do it."  
 Myra blushed to the eyes and said:  
 "I can not explain."  
 "Then I can not give you the explanation."  
 Again there followed an awkward silence, but Myra was the first to speak. She said:  
 "You force me to a confession."  
 "Hold!" cried Tom; "I will not. I have been rude and unfair and unmanly throughout. I will answer your question."

A dark suspicion had flashed through Tom's mind. He had come to believe that Myra really loved Rolando, and that she desired to satisfy herself on the one point. He suspected an inward struggle was going on in her heart, and he said:

"I threatened him because I hated him."  
 "I do not believe it," came the frank declaration.  
 "You doubt my word, Miss Hubbard?"  
 "I do."  
 "Then you believe me to be a falsifier?"  
 "As concerns this matter I do."

The situation was an awkward and startling one.

"Why should I make a false statement?"  
 "You are laboring under a misapprehension."  
 "I am?"  
 "Yes."

"In what respect?"  
 "You think I am a falsifier."  
 "Miss Hubbard!" ejaculated Tom.  
 "Yes, and you force me to a declaration. I am determined to know the truth. Hear me: I do not love Ralph Rolando; I never can love him. I am not seeking to vindicate him; I am seeking your vindication."

The frank avowal almost took Tom's breath away; his emotion and agitation at that moment were excessive.

"Do you understand—I do not seek his vindication. I seek yours. Will you answer me now?"

"Let me think a moment, Miss Hubbard."  
 "Do not think—do not waste time in arranging another evasion. I propose to have you tell me the truth, and I repeat my question: why did you threaten Ralph Rolando?"

"I may answer you; but let me first ask you a question."

"Proceed."

"From whom did you learn that I had threatened him?"

"From the doctor who attended him."

"And how did he chance to tell you the facts?"

"I was asking him concerning the condition of Rolando, and incidentally he told me that you were the cause of his illness, and then told me the facts. I did not believe his statement. I sought you and you admitted that the accusations were true; but later on I thought the whole matter over, and I came to the conclusion that there was something behind it all that required explanation, and I then determined to seek the explanation."

"You are very kind, and have been very considerate of my reputation."

"I love the truth, and know that fact. I now expect you will tell me the truth."

"Remember, I have not volunteered this explanation."

"No."

"Nor have I led up to a demand from you for an explanation."

"No."

"And you really declare that you do not, and never can, regard Mr. Rolando?"

"I despise him! There, is that explicit enough?"

"I will tell you all."  
 "Yes, do."  
 "You remember the night of the dance?"

"I do."  
 "You kindly showed me particular attention that evening, or rather, you permitted me to show you particular attention."

"I remember."

"I accompanied you to your home that night."

"I remember."

"After I left you an attack was made upon me. I was knocked down with a club."

"And Rolando was your assailant?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not expose him?"

"We will not discuss that part of the affair; but I did obtain ample proof of his identity as my assailant; and later on he assaulted me again—actually sought to murder me."

"Murder you?" ejaculated Myra.

"Yes."

Tom proceeded and related the incidents of the night when Ralph really did attempt to kill him. Myra listened with distended eyes, and when Tom had concluded, she exclaimed:

"And during the last four years I have permitted that assassin to reckon himself among my friends. Mr. Weir, you have done me a great wrong."

"How?"

"You should have exposed that man. Why did you deceive me?"

"I did not deceive you."

"I asked you if you had threatened him?"

"You did."

"And you told me you had."

"Yes; I threatened him with exposure unless he left the school. I did not think myself bound to live in constant peril of my life."

"And why did you not make this explanation when I asked you the question?"

"I did not wish to blacken that man's character, although I knew he was my bitter enemy."

"But—"

Myra stopped short.

"Well?"

"Suppose I had liked him; see what an injury you would have done me."

"All's well that ends well," said Tom, really feeling guilty as he spoke the adage.

Myra rose from her seat and paced the floor a moment, and then she said as she came and stood before Tom:

"I now repeat I am sorry I asked you to accompany me home. I have invited for you a great peril."

#### CHAPTER LVIII.

Tom smiled, and said:

"You need not fear for me, as I do not fear that fellow. He can do me no harm."

"Alas! a tragedy has almost occurred already; and what will come? And these perils have all come upon you through me. It was because you danced with me the night of the german, years ago, that he assaulted you, and now he will surely seek your life again because of my asking you to accompany me home this night."

"You need have no fear."

Tom remained a few moments longer talking with Myra, and then rose to depart.

"I shall see you again, Mr. Weir?" said Myra.

"Do you wish to see me?"

"If it were not for that man's utter hatred I should desire to have you call upon me."

"And am I to be deprived of that pleasure because that man hates me?"

"I fear what may happen."

"I do not wish to cause you alarm. I will not call until events shall occur that will remove all cause for alarm."

Tom did not dare trust himself to say more, and he bid Myra adieu.

Once upon the street and on the way to his apartments, strange, wild thoughts passed through our hero's mind. He did not dare entertain beyond an instant the bright and glorious hopes that flitted across his brain, and he walked along deeply engrossed, when suddenly he heard a cry of alarm. He turned and saw a man lying upon the sidewalk. He ran toward the man, and at the same instant the man again in a wild tone shouted:

"Help! Help! Murder!"

Our hero leaned over the poor fellow and recognized him. It was Rolando, and in surprise our hero exclaimed:

"Aha, Rolando! it's you?"

As the words escaped our hero's lips a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and Tom was jerked to his feet.



"Hold him," said Rolando. "He is my murderer. His name is Thomas Weir. He sought to murder me in cold blood."

The policeman sounded an alarm and a second officer appeared on the scene. Tom was too surprised and dazed to realize at the moment just what was occurring, and when policeman number two arrived officer number one bid him summon an ambulance.

"What has occurred?" asked officer number two.

"A cold-blooded murder. I saw this fellow strike that man to death."

When Tom heard these words, he exclaimed:

"Officer, you are mistaken. I did not strike that man. I do not know how he became injured."

"That won't do," said the officer in return. "I've got you dead to rights! I was watching you. I saw you following this gentleman and I saw you strike him down. If he dies, you'll hang. For once we've got an assassin dead to rights."

An ambulance arrived, and Tom was led away and placed in a cell, but before he was consigned to a dungeon he heard the officer's report to the sergeant in charge, and the man gave a detailed account as to how he had seen Tom follow the dead man, for the report had circulated that the injured man had died. The officer further stated that he had seen the murderer strike the fatal blow, and had arrested him just as he was about to plunge the fatal knife once again in the victim's heart, and the bloody knife was handed to the sergeant at the desk.

"I did not strike the man. I do not know who stabbed him!" declared our hero.

The sergeant merely said:

"You need not make any statement to me; you can reserve your story for the coroner."

Tom, as stated, was placed in a cell, and then he had time to think the matter over calmly; his nerve had returned, and his blood ran cold as the true facts of the case and the possibilities passed in review before his mind.

Upon the following morning our hero was taken before a magistrate on a charge of attempted murder, and then for the first time since his incarceration Tom heard that Rolando was not dead.

A preliminary examination was held. The victim of the assault could not be present, and the officer gave his testimony in brief, and Tom was committed to await the result of the injury to Rolando.

We will not go into all the particulars of the examination, but our hero was not returned to the station-house, but taken to the Tombs and placed in a murderer's cell.

It was after his return to a cell that he managed to secure a morning paper, and there he read a sensational account of a murder.

The wounded man had made an ante-mortem statement, and in his account he positively identified our hero as the would-be assassin and assigned a motive for the crime, and gave a detailed account how upon former occasions Tom had sought to take his life.

Tom Weir read the account through from the beginning to the end, and then calmly thought over the whole affair, and reached a conclusion, and his conclusion presented one of the most novel schemes of revenge ever perpetrated by an enemy upon his intended victim.

Tom reasoned that Rolando had determined upon suicide and had deliberately planned the taking of his own life so it would appear that he had been murdered, and by his death he would inflict the most terrible vengeance upon the man he hated.

Later in the day, the lawyer with whom Tom had read called upon him, and our hero made his statement, and when he had concluded his friend remarked:

"The circumstances are very unfortunate, Weir. Your statement may be true, but true or false, if that man dies you will hang, and nothing on earth can save you."

Tom knew that the lawyer was his friend, and up to that moment had loved and respected him, but to his horror Tom also recognized that his story was not believed, and after his friend went away and our hero thought over the matter, he realized how utterly impossible it would be under all the circumstances to convince any one that his statement was true and his conclusions correct.

Several reporters sought to interview our hero, but he declined to talk, under the advice of his friend, Mr. James, the lawyer, who had called upon him.

The afternoon editions of the papers contained a still more detailed account of the attempted murder, and it had been worked into a first-class sensational romance. A sketch of Tom's life was given, and many articles of bitter enmity that had existed between the two young men at school, and it was stated that upon two former occasions the ex-bootblack had sought to take the life of Rolando. It was made to appear as a terrible vendetta of the most approved Corsican type.

There was but one decent feature of the whole affair. It was stated that a beautiful lady was at the bottom of the case, and her name was withheld.

The latter fact was the only consolation our hero gathered of all the incidents connected with the affair.

A week passed, and it became reported that the chances were favorable to the recovery of the bootblack's victim.

In the meantime several friends had called upon Tom, but the latter had refused to speak about the case. He had told the truth to Mr. James, and saw that the latter doubted his explanation, as intimated. Tom knew that Mr. James was his friend, and when he doubted his statements it seemed useless to repeat the strange tale to any one else. Our hero fully realized that he was a doomed man.

#### CHAPTER LIX.

At the close of our preceding chapter we recorded that Tom fully realized that he was a doomed man, and such was the fact. He had thought over all the circumstances; he had studied all the accounts in the papers; he had calmly dwelt upon every incident, and saw through the whole scheme, and at the same time he realized how impossible it would be for him to prove his innocence. The evidence pointing to his guilt was not circumstantial but positive. There was not a flaw in the chain of evidence; it was absolute and direct and unanswerable, and against it he had not one incident to present in rebuttal. He almost regretted that Rolando had not died and made him appear as a successful murderer facing the death penalty. The penalty, as the facts stood, would be twenty years at least in state prison at hard labor, and he was as certain to be called upon to meet the penalty as the sun would rise on the following day.

Tom meantime fully discerned the marvelous cunning of his enemy. He saw that Rolando had struck the blow in his own bosom. He also harbored the suspicion that the fellow never intended it to be a fatal blow. He had driven the knife with the dead certainty that it would not be a fatal wound—fatal only to the man he hated.

Public opinion from the first was against our hero.

As stated, over a week passed, and as a public sensation the matter had ceased to be a daily topic for the press, some later tragedy had supplanted it; but as far as the real actors were concerned, the interest became even more intense.

Mr. James had called daily upon our hero, and no allusion had been again made to Tom's explanation.

Mr. James said that at the proper time he would secure a great criminal lawyer to act for the defense, and also said he would do all that he conscientiously could to aid the young man concerning whom he had once indulged such high hopes.

During all this time one problem had constantly presented itself to our hero's mind—what would Myra think of the whole affair?

He had not heard a word from her, nor had her name once been given to the public. He could not expect that she would come near him under all the circumstances, but he was curious to know what she would think of the possibility of his innocence or guilt.

One day his cell door opened and a lady heavily veiled was admitted into his cell.

Tom stared in real wonderment, as he had no lady friends. He could not call Miss Hubbard a friend; his meetings with her had been merely incidental and peculiar, and our readers can judge of his great surprise when, after the departure of the turnkey, and after she had been locked in the cell, the lady drew aside her veil and revealed the beautiful face of Myra Hubbard.

Tom was taken all aback, and his heart was in his throat, and it was in a choking voice that he at length managed to say:

"It is very kind for you to come and see a wretch like me."

"You are not a wretch."

"Thank you."

"I know you are an innocent man."

"Again I thank you, from my heart."

"I should have come to see you sooner."

"No, no; it is kind for you to come at all."

"I would have come immediately, but I thought it better for you that I should wait until the excitement calmed down. That is the only reason I did not hasten here."

"And why should you have come at all?"

"Because I am the cause of your being here."

"You? Oh, no!"

"Listen: I know how generously you will excuse my conduct; but nothing you can say will excuse me in my own mind. What I feared has happened. You remember I warned you that trouble would come. I only blame myself. You are innocent—I know you are innocent!"

"But, Miss Hubbard, the circumstances point to me as a guilty man. The evidence is direct."

"I know that, but when the trial comes I will have something to say."

"Not one word."

"I beg your pardon, I shall tell my story to the whole world, and my testimony will confirm yours. I have studied up this case."

"But have you observed how close and positive the testimony is against me?"

"I have; but only one side of the story has been told."

"I told my version to my best friends—a gentleman who an hour before this terrible affair occurred would have taken my word against the oaths of a dozen men—but he could not accept my statement; and when he doubts, no jury can ever be sworn who will believe. No, I am a doomed man!"

"You are not, and you will have a friend at the proper moment who will bring to your aid every possible incident that will serve you. Yes, you are not to suffer without a fight that will become memorable."

"And who may this friend be?"

"My father; he will throw himself on your side."

"Why should your father identify himself with my affairs?"

"I have told him all."

"You have told him all?" repeated Tom.

"Yes."

"What could you tell him?"

"I have convinced him that indirectly I am responsible for this misfortune that has come to you."

"Miss Hubbard, you are a noble and generous girl; but, alas! it is not worth while that either you or your father should identify yourselves with me. Nothing can save me. My life is ruined. I am a doomed man! This fellow has played his cards too well. I do not desire to be saved. My life is blasted! I shall plead guilty. I will not permit any friends to identify themselves with me."

"Ah, I care not what you may decide; you can be and you shall be saved!"

"And you really believe I am innocent?"

"I know you are innocent."

"Why are you so positive?"

"I know as well as I live that you are innocent."

"I have not declared my innocence to you."

"It is not necessary that you should. I know you struck that man in self-defense, and circumstances make it appear as an assault, and that villain is taking advantage of the accidental circumstances that enable him to make it appear as an unprovoked assault, a deliberate attempt at murder."

"And you think he provoked me?"

"I know he did. I know as well as I know that I live at this moment that you struck that man in self-defense."

"Miss Hubbard, you are mistaken!" came the startling statement from Tom Weir.

#### CHAPTER LX.

MYRA had seated herself on the stool in the cell, but when Tom uttered the words recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, she leaped to her feet, her eyes bulged, and her beautiful face assumed a ghastly hue.

"You did not strike him in self-defense!" she ejaculated, in a husky voice.

"I did not!" came the answer, in a calm tone.

There followed a moment's pause. Tom looked straightforward and spoke in calm tones.

"It can not be possible that you are guilty?" cried Myra. "I will not believe it, though the declaration comes from your own lips."



"Miss Hubbard, on my honor I did not strike that man in self-defense."

"If your words are proved true I shall die!" came the singular and startling declaration.

"I did not strike him at all," said Tom.

"You did not strike him at all?"

"I did not."

Myra glared. She was amazed beyond expression.

"I do not understand," she said.

A suspicion ran through her mind that Tom had lost his reason.

"Miss Hubbard, as true as I stand before you at this moment I am as innocent of that man's blood as a babe unborn!"

"And you did not strike him even in self-defense?"

"I did not."

"Thank Heaven!" came the ejaculation.

Again there followed a moment's pause, and then Myra asked:

"How did he receive his wound?"

"As true as you are a believer in my innocence I solemnly declare that I believe his wound was self-inflicted."

"Again I do not understand."

Tom explained his theory, after having related all the circumstances attending the tragedy, and when he had concluded, Myra said:

"I believe every word you have spoken."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

Suddenly Myra exclaimed:

"I see it all now. Yes, yes, I remember!"

Tom remained silent, and Myra appeared a moment lost in deep thought, and finally she said:

"Mr. Weir, I recall a very significant incident."

"Indeed?"

"Yes—one that fully confirms your theory."

"I feel that my theory is correct."

Ralph Rolando once brought me a novel to read. It was a French romance, and the whole story was founded upon an incident exactly similar to what has occurred. A Frenchman revenged himself upon an enemy by committing suicide in such a manner as to make it appear that his foe had struck the fatal blow, and I remember Rolando's comment. He said the suicide was a fool; he should have wounded himself and have sent his enemy to the galleys, and then he could have enjoyed his revenge."

"This is a most remarkable confirmation, Miss Hubbard. We can now see where this fellow got his idea for perpetrating this terrible revenge upon me."

"Yes; but he shall not enjoy his revenge."

"Alas! he can."

"Never!"

"You do not grasp the situation, Miss Hubbard. Remember, I am a lawyer, only a young one, but I can see how it is impossible to establish my innocence. Had I really struck this man down in self-defense then your evidence and other incidents might tell in my favor; but I did not strike him at all. My absolute innocence increases the difficulty of my defense. I am a doomed man. He has played his cards well."

"You shall not become his victim. I will force that man to confess."

"He will never confess."

"I will buy his confession."

A certain suspicion flashed through Tom's mind, and he exclaimed:

"No, you shall not! He may win a more terrible vengeance than the one that he has already won."

"We shall wait. I promise you that sooner or later your innocence shall be established; that man shall not triumph over you."

"Miss Hubbard, I fear you are too self-sacrificing."

"How?"

"I fear you assume more responsibility than you should in what has occurred."

"I feel that I am responsible for that man's making you his victim."

"Not at all! He hated me before I had ever seen you. His hatred of me dates some time previous to the aggravation he received upon the night of the dance, so I have one favor to ask of you."

"Name it."

"You must promise to grant it?"

"You must first name your request."

Tom was thoughtful a moment and then said:

"You can do me no service; it is enough that I know of your kindly interest in me. You are a noble and generous girl, but you must leave me to my fate, and forget that I ever lived."

"I can not grant your request."

"You will!"

"Never!"

"Listen: you can not aid me."

"I can."

"No, you can not; but you may do me harm."

"What do you mean? How can I do you harm?"

"I will make a confession: I do not mean to submit to this man's devilish conspiracy."

"No, no; you must not think of that."

"Of what?"

"I see your design."

"You do?"

"I do."

"What is my design?"

"You mean to escape through the grave."

Tom laughed, and answered:

"I mean no such thing. That man has won only a temporary advantage. I will have to force him to acknowledge my innocence. No, I have no idea of enacting the rôle of a coward."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"I have not matured my plans yet. All I ask is that you do not identify yourself with me."

"Will you reveal your plan to me?"

"When I have decided upon it I will."

"Thank you."

## CHAPTER LXI.

MYRA remained some time longer with our hero, but at length took her departure, and after she had gone Tom paced his cell to and fro, and strange, wild thoughts ran through his mind, and finally his meditations found voice in mutterings.

"What can it all mean?" he murmured. "What must I conclude, it is all so strange? Dare I put one interpretation upon her interest in me? A moment he was silent, and then resumed: "Love is a strange power. It acts oftentimes in a very mysterious way. Yes, I'll speak it: Can it be possible that this wondrously true and beautiful woman loves the ex-boot-black? Stranger incidents have occurred since history has become a record."

Our hero thought over a hundred little incidents dating back to the time when he was a student at the seminary. He remembered the night at the dance, and he recalled certain words that had fallen from Myra's lips. He recalled the ball games, and her deep interest in his success, and he also recalled how she appeared to glory in his triumph beyond any one else, and again he summoned a recollection of the flower at the moment—the critical moment—when the home run was needed, and still again he muttered:

"Can it be possible that this fellow Rolando discovered her secret long ago, while I have been blind as a bat?"

Thrills of pleasure ran through his veins, but suddenly his dreams changed, and his heart became cold and heavy. No, no, it could not be. He was a fool—he was deceiving himself—her interest in him arose from the knowledge that he was being pursued and persecuted by a man whom she hated.

"I will not deceive myself," he muttered; "I will not be a fool, nor will I permit her to become identified as my friend in this terrible matter, and I will not reveal my plans to her. I will play my game alone—my prospects hereabouts are blasted. I will not surrender and submit like a calf, nor will I flee away; I will not even escape through the grave! I will take my chances and face my fate like a man."

Tom was still pacing his cell when there came a visitor to him. The latter was a strange-looking man clad in a strange manner. Upon being left alone with the former the visitor stood for a long time with his eyes fixed on our hero's face, and at length Tom asked:

"Well, sir, may I ask who you are and why you have come here?"

"I will tell you who I am later on, and my reason for coming here was to ask you a few questions."

Tom thought his visitor was some crank who had gained admission to his presence, and he said:

"You will please ask your questions quickly and leave me to myself."

"I will not ask my questions quickly; I am here for a long talk."

"I do not propose to be bothered, sir, and I shall summon one of the keepers and have you taken away."

"Be patient, young man; you will be glad

that I came. I am not here to ask idle questions. I believe I know more about you than you know about yourself. Who were your parents?"

Tom gazed in amazement and looked more particularly at his visitor. He detected that the latter was an elderly man, and he made a second very singular discovery. He perceived that his visitor was disguised. His beard was certainly false, and the possibility existed that he was otherwise gotten up under cover.

"If you have really come here upon other than business you will excuse my rudeness, sir; you will understand that in my position I can not have patience with one who visits me from mere idle curiosity."

"I am not here from a desire to gratify mere idle curiosity, and I will tell you frankly I read about your case in the papers. There were certain incidents in your career that led me to suspect that possibly I knew your parents. This is the occasion of my visit, and I trust you will answer my questions freely and frankly, as I may be of great service to you."

"I will answer all your questions, sir."

"Then tell me your history."

Tom told all the incidents of his life—only a garbled account had appeared in the papers—and when he had concluded his visitor advanced toward him, and in tones of deep emotion said:

"Tom Weir, had you ordered me from your presence you would have sent away your own father!"

Tom gazed in amazement.

"You are surprised."

"I am, sir; I do not really believe I understand you."

"My words are plain. You are my son."

"I am your son?"

"Yes."

"If I am your son how is it I have been forgotten and neglected all these years?"

"I have a strange and remarkable story to relate to you: I did not know you were in existence, and let me say that you will have no need to be ashamed of your father. I am one of the best-known gentlemen in the city of Philadelphia. I will tell you further that I am a man of great wealth, and you are my sole heir. Guilty or innocent, you are my son."

"You say 'guilty or innocent,' sir?"

"Yes; I did not dare ask the question."

"I am innocent!"

"You are innocent?"

"I am."

"Tell me all the circumstances!"

Our hero in giving a history of himself had failed to relate his experience with Myra Hubbard and Ralph Rolando, and he amended his statement by giving his visitor an account of the incidents that led to the tragedy and the arrest, and when he had concluded the gentleman said:

"I am a happy man. All this has come to me like a revelation from Heaven."

"I have given all the explanations, sir; will you now tell me your story and let me know how it happened that you permitted your son to become a foundling?"

"I will tell you all; my name is Henry Weir Manders."

"Judge Manders!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, my son, I am Judge Manders."

Tom stood and gazed like one transfixed. He knew Judge Manders by reputation. The latter was known as one of the greatest jurists in the State of Pennsylvania—a gentleman recognized as one of the ablest men in the land.

"And you are my father, sir?"

"Yes, you are my son."

"Is there not a possibility that there exists a mistake in this matter?"

"No, my son; there is no mistake. Of course I will be compelled to verify your story, but in my own mind I know you are my son; you are the counterpart of your mother; the resemblance is marvelous. I would have recognized you had I met you on the street without any previous intimation concerning your identity."

"This is all very strange, sir."

"Yes, it is all very strange, but the explanation will be complete, and my vindication also. I can see now that I am a fortunate man at present. I am dazed; indeed, my talk to you is partly mechanical, so great is my surprise and wonderment; but I am thankful for one fact: the insane creature who robbed me of my infant son did leave one link for identification. My attention was called to you because of your name, Thomas Weir. Your real name is Thomas Weir Manders, and all shall be explained. It is a strange story I have to tell."



## CHAPTER LXII.

IN our narrative we are not seeking to describe the displays of emotion that were betrayed by father and son, but we will say that the approaches to a revelation were accompanied by exhibitions of great agitation on the part of both.

Tom had told his father all the facts of his life. He had gone into the minutest details, and had convinced his father that in finding a son he had found one of whom he could be proud, save that at the moment he rested under the shadow of a grave accusation.

The conversation between father and son at length led up to the subjoined narrative.

Judge Manders was the son of a wealthy and very avaricious man, who had accumulated great wealth, but who had concealed the fact, and had sent his son at an early age into the world to make his own way. Mr. Manders, the father of Tom's father, lived to be a very old man. He had lived to see his son become a very successful man, and when he died the truth respecting his wealth became known, and Judge Manders found himself several times a millionaire.

Owing to his father's singular conduct, the judge had been compelled to make his way in the world, and had never felt warranted in taking unto himself a wife, and at the age of five-and-forty he was a bachelor. He then went to Europe, and in Switzerland met a lovely girl—a governess in a French family whose guest he was.

The governess was a highly educated girl—a great linguist. The judge fell in love with her and married her, and all the incidents connected with his marriage were commonplace and unromantic enough.

After a year's travel in Europe Judge Manders brought his wife home with him to America, and a year after his return his son was born. A French woman was his wife's attendant, and when the child was a few months old child and nurse suddenly disappeared.

The disappearance was one of the strangest and most startling incidents of the time.

But one conclusion could be reached—the nurse had stolen the child, and it was not until months afterward that the mystery was explained. Meantime the father of the stolen babe had expended thousands and thousands of dollars in order to discover the child-stealer, but all efforts failed. Meantime both parents were almost distracted with grief, and one day after the expiration of a year, the father and mother were seated together talking over their bereavement, and the judge chanced to say:

"I did not know when I took you from your home in Geneva that I was to be the innocent cause of bringing upon you so great a misery."

The judge had hardly uttered the words when his wife suddenly leaped to her feet, and throwing herself upon her husband's neck, exclaimed:

"The mystery is explained!"

It was some moments before she recovered her composure sufficiently to state her conclusions, and then she said:

"Our child was stolen by Mademoiselle Daubet!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the husband.

"I will explain: from the first moment that the nurse who stole our child came into my presence I felt an aversion toward her, but as she had been recommended by our old family physician I said nothing. But a chill ran through my veins every time she came into my presence during the first week of her advent in our home. In time the feeling of aversion became less strong, and as she appeared so skillful she won my confidence. But many times it struck me that there was something familiar in the tones of her voice, and I discovered that her hair was dyed, and that in other ways she was disguised. I concluded her methods were the result of vanity. I thought she was seeking to make herself appear younger, but now I am satisfied she was seeking to make herself appear older. Yes, it is strange I never suspected before, but it all comes to me now. I know why her voice seemed familiar. Yes, yes, she has carried out her threat—she has made good her declaration of vengeance!"

"Her declaration of vengeance?" repeated her husband.

"Yes."

"Did she threaten you with vengeance?"

"She did."

"Mademoiselle Daubet?"

"Yes."

"Why should she threaten to be revenged upon you?"

"I will tell you a secret: that woman loved you!"

"Loved me?"

"Yes."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true."

"I never paid her the least attention."

"I know it; but she was partly insane, and I never knew of her love for you until the day succeeding our marriage, and then she came to me and declared that you were her affinity, that I had come between her and her love, that had it not been for my artful fascination you would have loved her, and then she said:

"I will be avenged; yes, some day when you do not look for me I will rob you as you have robbed me, and you shall suffer as I have suffered!"

"This is a remarkable story," said the judge.

"It is."

"Why did you not relate the facts to me before?"

"I did not think them worth relating. I looked upon her threats as the meaningless sayings of a demented woman."

"She is six or seven years older than you, my dear?"

"Yes."

"And she confessed to loving me?"

"Yes."

"And threatened you?"

"Yes."

"And what do you now believe?"

"I believe she has stolen our child. She said she would rob me, as I had robbed her."

"And she bribed our nurse to steal our child?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Can you not discern?"

"I can not."

"The nurse was Mademoiselle Daubet disguised. She has made good her mad threat."

## CHAPTER LXIII.

WHEN Mr. Manders heard his wife's statement he glared in horror, and when he sufficiently recovered, exclaimed:

"What has she done with our child?"

"We can easily learn."

"How?"

"We will go to Switzerland."

In further talk with her husband, Mrs. Manders explained:

"Mademoiselle Daubet was a half-crazy woman—indulged in all manner of fancies—and it was not strange that she should fall in love with you and conceal her love until she revealed it to me in the singular manner I have related."

Mr. Manders and his wife did go to Switzerland, and the astute lawyer arranged his plans in such a manner that he frightened mademoiselle into a confession; but, alas! her confession contained the statement that the child had died the night following its abduction, and she went into full details of its death—told where it died, and named the undertaker who buried it—in fact, made a full confession, and upon the morning following her confession she was found dead in her room. She had taken her own life, but she left a note reaffirming every incident related in her confession.

Mr. Manders and his wife returned to America, and the former, though not doubting mademoiselle's confession, started in to confirm it. He found the undertaker, and an old man who distinctly recollected the burial of the child. He said he recollected it because of the singular actions of the confessed mother. He of course formed the most natural idea as to the circumstances, and he took Mr. Manders to the cemetery and showed him what was still visible of the little grave.

The above was the story told to our hero by the man who claimed to be his father, and a very remarkable statement it was.

With a voice trembling with emotion Tom asked:

"My mother—does she still live?"

"Yes, my son, your mother lives, and again let me say to you that your resemblance to your mother is simply marvelous. Believing that you were dead, your mother in time partly recovered from the shock of her bereavement, but she had been a sad woman ever since."

"Does she know of your coming to New York?"

"Of course; but she does not know of my mission here."

"And you are fully convinced of my identity?"

"I am; but I shall visit the lying-in home where you were first consigned by that wicked and vengeful woman, and then we shall take measures to establish your innocence."

"That can never be done."

"We will see about that."

Upon the morning following the incidents we have described, Mr. Manders again appeared at the prison, and he told his son that he had ascertained beyond all question that the child left at the asylum was really Thomas Weir Manders. He said it was a fortunate circumstance that the mad woman who placed him there had pinned a part of the child's real name to his clothes; but he had received information that had enabled him to secure the clothes the child wore when brought there—they having been safely kept by the matron in charge, and carefully ticketed with a little memorandum of the incidents connected with the reception of that particular child, and the record of dates fully established a link, and the party leaving the child had given the exact date of the child's birth, which accorded with that of our hero.

Mr. Manders told his son that he had been in consultation with a great detective, and the latter had advised him to conceal all the facts.

"This officer," continued Mr. Manders, "has already started on the case. He will investigate your record, and he has promised to establish your innocence. He is coming to consult with you."

"When?"

"In a day or two, and in the meantime you must not say a word—neither will I, my son."

"But my mother?"

"She must know nothing about your discovery until your innocence is established. The shock of this new misfortune coming together with the joy of your discovery would kill her."

Our hero's thoughts after the departure of his father it would be hard to portray; and he was still walking his cell when Myra Hubbard was shown in as a visitor.

"It is kind of you to come here again to see me."

"I have a very startling revelation to make."

"Is Rolando dead?"

"No. That would be a misfortune, for then your innocence could never be established; his lips would be closed forever. I pray that he may live. Let me tell you something. I said I had a startling revelation to make; I will acquaint you with it later on. But I have discovered why this man was so anxious to marry me."

"It is not strange he should be so anxious to marry you."

"It is not strange?"

"No."

A strange look came into Myra's eyes as she asked, archly:

"Why is it not strange?"

"Shall I speak frankly?"

"Certainly."

"You are one of the most lovable woman on the face of the earth."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do."

"And you believe that?"

"I do, as I live!"

"It's strange."

"What is strange?"

There was a strange look came into Myra's face as, blushing to the eyes, she said:

"If that is true, it is strange you never fell in love with me."

Tom stood like a man paralyzed, but after a moment said:

"It is not strange."

Myra turned deathly pale when Tom made the remark last quoted. It was a frank confession that he had not fallen in love with her, but she did ask in a trembling voice:

"Why is it not strange after you have admitted I am such a lovable woman?"

"I did not dare love you; I did not dare think of such a thing."

"Why not?"

"You know my story: I was but a boot-black."

"My father was only a plow-boy, and afterward a mill-boy."

Tom was no fool. Myra's words were too plain. There followed a moment's silence, broken by Myra, who asked:

"If you had not been afraid to think of it!"

"You will drive me mad, Miss Hubbard."

"I will drive you mad?"

"Yes."



"How?"  
 "I dare not believe that I dare put the seeming inference upon your words."  
 "You may."  
 "I may."  
 "Yes."  
 Tom trembled like an aspen leaf as he asked:  
 "Dare I tell you that I love you?"  
 "Do you?"  
 "As man never so loved woman before!"

## CHAPTER LXIV.

MYRA laughed merrily, and said:  
 "I knew you did all the time."  
 "You knew I did?"  
 "Certainly; and I have loved you since the first hour I ever met you."  
 Tom stood like one transfixed, but he could not stand there thus like a statue, and he did spring forward, clasp the beautiful girl in his arms, and imprinted a kiss upon her brow, and then the lovely girl said:  
 "There! that will do, we have no time to make love now."  
 "Am I not dreaming?" muttered Tom.  
 "No, you are not dreaming."  
 "If it is a dream may I never awake!"  
 "Well, you shall awake."  
 "But, Myra, we must face the truth. This mutual confession is unfortunate. I will be a condemned criminal; you can never become my wife; there exists an insurmountable barrier."  
 "You are mistaken, Tom Weir; your innocence must and shall be established."  
 "Never."  
 "Leave that to me. I said this man sought my fortune."  
 "But he is rich."  
 "There is just where you are mistaken. This very morning the failure of Rolando's father's firm has been announced. All the partners have fled. The failure is one of the most disastrous stoppages that has occurred in New York for years. My father knew of their troubles months ago. He's a director in several banks, as you know."  
 "But tell me, how will this failure affect me?"  
 "I will."  
 "How?"  
 "I can not tell you now."  
 "Yes, tell me."  
 "It will lead to Ralph Rolando's confession."  
 "Never!"  
 "It will."  
 "Why do you think so?"  
 "My father knows how to bring it about."  
 "Your father?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Does your father know of the facts?"  
 "Yes; I have confessed all to him, and he will do anything for the happiness of his only child."  
 "I do not understand. You have confessed to him?"  
 "Yes."  
 "What have you confessed?"  
 "All."  
 "All?" repeated Tom.  
 "Yes."  
 "Your love?" asked our hero, in a hesitating tone.  
 "Yes."  
 "To your father?"  
 "Yes."  
 "And what does he say?"  
 "He is delighted."  
 "I am astounded!"  
 "My father knows all about you."  
 "Knows all about me?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How could he know all about me?"  
 "He has traced your career from the moment you were taken off the streets of New York, and he looks upon you as I do, as one of the grandest young men he ever knew, and he approves of my choice."  
 "Great mercy!" ejaculated Tom, "what can it bring forth?"  
 "My father has suggested a plan."  
 "He has?"  
 "Yes—to fully establish your innocence."  
 "What is his plan?"  
 "Ralph Rolando is a beggar."  
 "Well?"  
 "My father will pay him a large sum of money to tell the truth, and he will do it."  
 A moment Tom was lost in deep thought, and then there came a bright look to his handsome face, and he said:  
 "The clouds are lifting at last, Myra. You

are a noble girl, and I will have a revelation to make that will bring joy to your heart if you really love me."

"I do love you, Tom—I have loved you all these years."

"Your father need not pay one cent; but I do think circumstances have turned in my favor, and the confession may be had."

"My father will joyfully pay the money."

"But he need not."

Tom spoke in a peculiar tone, and Myra asked:

"Who will pay the money?"

"My father will pay it."

"Your father."

"Yes."

Myra glared.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"My father is several times a millionaire. Yes, Myra, I am an only child—I am the heir to millions."

"Have you gone mad, Tom?"

"No."

"What do you mean? Have you been masquerading all these years?"

"No."

"Then you have certainly gone mad!"

"No, I am perfectly sane; and what is more, for the first time in my life wildly and madly happy—that is all."

"But you said your father would pay the money."

"Yes; but you, my dearest, have opened up the way for the establishment of my innocence. But my father will pay the money."

"Your father?"

"Yes, my father."

"Who is your father?"

"One of the best and noblest of men."

"Tom, explain all this to me?"

"Will you promise to keep my secret?"

"Yes."

Tom told Myra the wonderful story of the discovery of his father. The beautiful girl listened with distended eyes, and when the wonderful narrative was completed she exclaimed:

"What a marvelous story! What a romance your life has been!"

"Yes; and after all how the shadows have rolled away, and what a glorious midday sun is now shining in upon my life!"

"What shall be done, Tom?"

"We will wait and see. Now you must leave all to my father. He has employed eminent counsel, and he will act on your plan."

"Tom, I feel assured that this man will confess."

"My dear, I will ask one favor; do not come here again."

"Why not?"

"Wait until I come to you."

"How can you?"

"I feel assured that acting on your plan my immediate liberty is assured."

"Tom, I shall go wild."

"We will wait and see."

A few moments later and Myra departed, and Tom again commenced pacing his cell, one of the happiest men on the face of the earth, and his happiness was greater because of facts that we shall record in our next chapter.

## CHAPTER LXV.

Two days passed, and during those two days our hero's father spent much time with him; and on the third day a gentleman was introduced into the cell who proved to be a famous detective. The latter asked Tom a great many questions, and then in the presence of his father suggested the plan for establishing his innocence.

The detective thought awhile, and said:

"Your plan can be carried out and it will succeed; but we must avoid all explanations or revelations. Just leave this to me," and turning to Mr. Manders, he asked: "What sum will you pay to establish your son's innocence?"

"Any sum to the amount of a million if necessary."

The detective smiled, and said:

"It would not cost you half that sum to settle a dozen cases like this."

"I desire to save my son at all hazards."

"Your son shall be saved."

"You speak very confidently."

"Yes."

"Then you have a definite plan?"

"I have."

"What is your plan?"

"I can not tell you at present. I first desire to have a talk with the other side."

The detective shortly after took his departure. He was a long-headed man. He had thought over the whole matter, and had decided upon a little trick that was not only ingenious, but well calculated to be carried through successfully.

The detective proceeded direct to the hospital, and made arrangements—after he had proved his identity—for a private interview with Ralph Rolando.

The latter was lying in his bed, thinking over the misfortunes that had so suddenly come upon him. He was in a bitter mood, and as he lay there he muttered:

"Hang it! this scheme has failed. Had my father's bad luck been delayed a few weeks I would have been all right; but now the game is all against me." A moment he meditated, and then added: "But I have my revenge at least—the miserable cur who has stood in my path will be most effectually removed. I will not be troubled by him any more."

The fellow was able to walk around, and he rose from his cot and commenced to pace the floor, and after a moment resumed his soliloquy:

"Hang it!" he said, "if the governor had only fixed me with a few thousands I'd have been all right; I could have carried out a good scheme I had in my head; but now I hardly know what to do."

Rolando was still pacing the room when the detective was shown into his presence.

The latter glanced at the invalid a moment, and then said:

"How do you do, sir?"

Rolando was a keen, cunning fellow, and answered, in a slow, calculating tone:

"I do not know you, sir."

The detective smiled, and answered:

"That is not strange, since you never saw me before, to my knowledge."

"But you speak as though you knew me."

"Well, I've heard of you."

As the detective spoke he passed Rolando a card. The latter glanced at it and read:

"PIPER,

"DETECTIVE."

A moment passed and the two men retired to a small private room.

"You are in a bad scrape, Mr. Rolando," said the detective.

"Oh, no; my wound is healing rapidly."

"Yes, so I've heard; and you expect in a few days to leave the hospital?"

"I do, sir."

Rolando was very wary.

"Do you know where you will go when you leave here?"

"That is my business."

"Ah! So it is mine, young man! You will go to prison?"

"To prison?"

"Yes."

"How dare you?"

"Oh, I dare anything!"

"Why will I go to prison?"

"Because your dastardly scheme has all been disclosed. I have been on this case, and I have secured positive testimony, even to a witness who saw you stab yourself. You are in a bad scrape."

"Bah! you can't frighten me!"

"I am not here to frighten you; I am here to get you out of a scrape and save scandal to a reputable family."

"The reputable family must take it as it comes."

"Hardly. See here, I will pay you twenty-five thousand dollars to own up the truth—to confess and save trouble. You will accept my offer or take the consequences. My advice has been to let you take the consequences, but others prefer the plan I suggest."

Rolando paced the floor a moment, and he said:

"I can not make a confession. I have already testified to the truth."

"Say, young man, I can help you out of a bad scrape. I have a plan that will save you, and permit you to make it right where you have committed a grievous wrong, and you can make twenty-five thousand dollars cash down."

"What is your plan?"

The detective revealed his plan, and when he had concluded, Rolando thought silently for a few moments, and then said:

"This man sought to kill me, but he wants to escape the consequences of his crime. I would do right to drive him to the wall, but



make your offer fifty thousand dollars and I will consider it."

"That will not do."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Agree to the plan."

"And will you make it fifty thousand dollars?"

"Yes, on one condition."

"Name the condition."

"You shall leave New York and not return for ten years."

"I accept your proposition."

There followed a moment's silence. The detective's suspicions were aroused. It struck him that Rolando had very suddenly determined to accede to the terms.

"I have something else to tell you, young man."

"It is not necessary. We understand each other."

"Not fully, I fear."

"Yes, fully."

"You have some scheme?"

"Yes; my scheme is to secure the fifty thousand dollars, that's all."

"But you will make this a clean and clear statement?"

"Certainly; I can make it any way to suit you, as I will perjure myself anyhow."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"That man did attempt to take my life. He it was who assaulted me; but I will clear him for the amount named."

#### CHAPTER LXVI.

THE arrangements with Rolando were completed, and it was agreed that he should receive the money immediately after the release of our hero, and he was to have ten days to complete his preparations for leaving New York.

Having arranged matters with Rolando, the detective appeared at the jail, and there met our hero and his father, to whom he said:

"It's all right."

"You have seen Rolando?"

"I have."

"And he consents to confess the truth?"

"He consents to anything, and I have agreed to pay him fifty thousand dollars. The money must be paid the moment your son is released. And now I will tell you my scheme: I will have the judge summon your son before him upon the regular examination. Rolando will appear as a witness, and will, after seeking to identify your son, swear that he was not his assailant. It will be a case of mistaken identification, and your son will be honorably acquitted and at the same time this fellow Rolando will be saved the humiliation of an actual confession."

The detective's plan was carried out just as he had arranged it. All the parties appeared in court, and Rolando swore that Tom was not the man who assaulted him.

The policeman had been seen, and was also a witness again, and upon the second examination admitted that he was mistaken when he swore he had seen the blow struck. He said he had seen only the prisoner present, but was deceived when he imagined he had seen the fatal stroke struck.

The final result was that our hero was released—honorably acquitted.

We will state here that the judge in his own mind believed that the case had been fixed up. Such arrangements are of almost daily occurrence in the courts, but the judge, under the circumstances, is powerless. He is compelled to render his judgments according to the evidence; and when the wounded man positively swore that the prisoner was not his assailant, but one thing remained to be done, and that was to honorably discharge the accused, and Tom left the court-room a free man.

Immediately after the proceedings in court the detective met Rolando and paid over to him the stipulated amount. Ralph received the money in a dazed manner, and asked:

"Who pays the money?"

"What difference does it make to you?"

"I only asked the question. It makes little difference so long as I am paid; but I tell you now that fellow did stab me."

"That's all right as far as you are concerned; but don't you say to any one else what you say to me, and what is more you be sure to fulfill your agreement and get out of the United States within the given time, or it will go hard with you, that's all."

"Mr. Hubbard pays the money, I suppose?"

"No, Mr. Hubbard does not pay it."

"Who does?"

"The father of the young man whom you so wrongfully conspired to injure."

"His father?"

"Yes."

"Has he a father?"

"Yes, sir."

"And his father is a rich man?"

"Yes; and, young man, let me tell you something," added the detective. "You are a smart fellow; you have a good start in life—a good education. Go to South America, Mexico, or some other place, lead an honest life, and become a good, happy, and prosperous man."

"Yes, I will follow your advice."

The two parted, and Ralph—who was stopping at an hotel, having been discharged from the hospital—commenced to pace to and fro, and he muttered:

"How things have changed! And that fellow is the son of a rich father, eh?—and Myra loves him, and he will make her his wife—and I become an outcast on the face of the earth. Well, we shall see! I am not downed quite so easily, nor will I surrender that girl without a struggle! I have one more card to play yet, and I will play it well. Let them wait and see!"

Meantime, immediately after his release, our hero, Thomas Weir Manders, called at the house of Myra Hubbard, and the romance of his life was told to the lovely girl's father, and the two young people talked over certain plans for the future; and that same evening our hero started with his father for Philadelphia to meet that fond and faithful mother who had so long mourned him as dead.

The meeting between mother and son we will not describe, but it was a strange meeting, and one distinguished by a joy that can only come under circumstances so strange and weird as those we have pictured in our narrative.

A few days passed, and one day our hero took up a New York paper and carelessly read item after item, until suddenly he came upon an announcement that caused him to glare like a man suddenly brought face to face with threatened death. The item that arrested his attention was the announcement of the strange and mysterious disappearance of a young and beautiful heiress, and the name of the lady was given as Miss Myra Hubbard, the daughter of the retired millionaire manufacturer.

#### CHAPTER LXVII.

WHEN Tom Weir Manders finished reading the account there came a wild throbbing in his brain, and an hour later he was upon his way to New York.

He reached the city and repaired direct to the house of Mr. Hubbard. He found that gentleman prostrated with grief and apprehension, and the appearance of our hero caused the old gentleman to exclaim:

"She's lost—she's lost!"

"You need have no fear, sir," said Tom. "I merely came here to reassure you and give you hope."

"But, my poor daughter! I fear she has been murdered! Every minute I expect a summons to the morgue."

"You fear she has been murdered?"

"Yes."

"Whom do you suspect as the assassin?"

"I know not whom to suspect; but if my daughter were living she would not leave me in suspense."

"My dear sir, your daughter lives."

"Do you know where she is?"

"I think I do."

"Where?"

"I will say no more; I will hasten to her rescue."

"Then you admit she is in peril?"

"I believe she is in peril."

"Tell me what you suspect?"

"I will report to you before to-morrow's dawn. I hope I may bring your daughter back to you."

Tom hastened from the house. He consulted with no one, but proceeded direct to the hotel where Ralph Rolando had been known to stop since his release from the hospital. Tom set on foot some very pertinent inquiries, and learned facts that served him as a clue. His directness seemed to be prompted by a weird inspiration. Having secured all the information he desired, he sought the detective who aided in the settlement that freed Tom from jail.

Tom imparted to the astute officer the information he had received, and in a few moments

the two were on their way to the river. A tug was secured, and the captain, under the immediate instructions of our hero ran out on the river and shaped his course down the bay. Tom and the detective were in the wheel-house, and when off Staten Island our hero suddenly exclaimed:

"Thank Heaven, we are in time; there's the yacht!"

The captain of the tug received specific instructions, and soon ran alongside a yacht riding at anchor.

Tom and the detective leaped aboard the sailing craft, and at the same instant a man came up from the cabin of the yacht, and a curse fell from his lips, for our hero leaped forward to meet him, and greeted his old-time enemy with the words:

"You villain! If any harm has come to Miss Hubbard, your life will answer for your villainy here and now."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ralph.

"Don't waste words! Where is Miss Hubbard?"

"How do I know anything about Miss Hubbard?"

The members of the crew crowded around, when the detective, addressing them, said:

"You men must not interfere here, or every man will be put on board the tug and carried in irons to the city!"

The crew held off, and Tom Weir started to descend to the cabin. Rolando leaped forward to intercept him, when he received a blow from our hero's naked fist that sent him reeling to the deck, and Tom dashed down into the cabin. Rolando leaped to his feet, and would have followed, but the detective covered him with the muzzle of a cocked pistol, and said:

"Move one step, and you are a dead man!"

Rolando did not move. The baffled villain knew that his game was up—that his last card had proved a failure.

Meantime our hero had reached the cabin, and a sight met his gaze that caused his heart to bleed. Lying upon a lounge was Myra. The fair girl looked as though she had been through a long siege of illness.

"I am here, and just in time!" cried Tom, as he sprung toward her.

The girl uttered an exclamation of thanks, and Tom made the further discovery that she was bound hands and feet. It took but a moment to free her, and he said:

"Dearest, we will not stop for explanations now. We will hasten to your father."

Myra's attire was speedily found, and Tom led her to the deck, and there stood Rolando as Tom led the rescued girl aboard the tug, and then he returned.

"Shall we lash him to the mast, and punish him as he deserves?" said Tom.

"No," said the detective, in a low tone. "All's well that ends well." This is, after all, a fortunate occurrence. If this fellow ever shows his face in New York again we can send him to Sing Sing for life."

The latter part of the detective's declaration was spoken in a louder tone, and was overheard by every one on board the yacht.

Tom and the detective retired to the tug, and the steamer was headed for the city, and ere they passed out of sight from the yacht those on the tug saw the sails of the other craft hoisted, and she glided away toward Sandy Hook.

Tom and Myra were standing side by side, and the detective said:

"That fellow, like Monte-Cristo, will never be heard of around these quarters again."

Myra's explanation was brief. She had been met by a little child who had besought her to go with her a few steps. The petition of the child was merely a device to lure Miss Hubbard to a retired street where a carriage was in waiting and two men seized and gagged her and put her in the carriage. She was driven to the river side and placed on board the yacht, and for three days she had been a prisoner.

For some reason or other, Rolando had not put in an appearance until about half an hour previous to the arrival of Tom Weir. And at the very moment the tug was being made fast to the yacht, Ralph was explaining his plans and purposes.

That same evening Myra was placed once again in the arms of her father, and one week later a marriage was announced as having been celebrated between Thomas Weir Manders, of Philadelphia, and Miss Myra Hubbard, of New York.

THE END.



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